Golf The Open Championship

Texan rides off with the title

David Davies

JUSTIN LEONARD, with a merciless display of precision putting, started five strokes behind Jesper Parnevik and beat the Swede by three to win the 126th Open Championship at Royal Troon last Sunday.

The least-heralded American of modern times — his amateur career was sandwiched between those of Phil Mickelson and Tiger Woods — produced a final-round 65 for a total of 272, 12 under par, to become the third successive player from his country to carry off the claret jug.

After accepting the trophy Leonard broke down during his speech as he tried to thank his family and friends. When he recovered he said: "They're here with me in spirit, that's all that matters."

Parnevik and Darren Clarke tied for second after the Swede bogeyed the final hole. While that represented invaluable experience for the Northern Irishman, Parnevik was bitterly disappointed. Not only has he been runner-up in this championship before, in 1994; this second place is his fifth of the season.

The championship has rarely seen such putting as Leonard produced over the closing holes. He had only 25 all day and three successive singles at the 15th, 16th and 17th holes were vital. The American picked out his 18ft par putt at the 15th. "That was the tournament right there," he said. "I didn't allow Jesper any breathing space."

For some inexplicable reason, given that he is far from conventionally handsome and not yet particularly rich, Leonard was selected by Cosmopolitan magazine as one of the 25 most eligible bachelors in the world last August. His response to questions on the subject has been an even blanker expression than usual and an intoned "next question".

His birdies involved a similar lack of histrionics but Parnevik, Clarke and Woods provided fantastic theatre. Everyone knew Woods had to go for everything to have any chance of making up the eight shots he was behind Parnevik. A visit to a greenside bunker at the 1st left him a 15-footer for par which he fairly rammed home. There was a hum of excitement: the would-be hero had made a declamatory opening statement.

For those who stayed by the 1st green there was more to come. Clarke took his driver, came within a few yards of driving the green, putted from 20 yards and again from 12 feet to secure his birdie. Parnevik, meanwhile, was on the up-slope of a bunker facing a shot which Peter Thomson, the five-time Open champion, thought the Swede would do well to get on the green. He almost holed it, tapping in from two feet.

Clarke took an iron for safety off the next tee and watched his ball soar on to South Bay beach, out of bounds. He needed a break to get back in the game and with his second to the 3rd he hit the pin, the ball finishing up four feet away for a seemingly certain birdie. Parnevik smiled, stood to his ball and stopped it closer by 12 inches.

This was great stuff and two birdies should have gone on the card. But Clarke missed and the Swede moved to 12 under, four ahead of the field.

Ideally leaders, if they are to win, do not drop shots but Parnevik failed to carry the bunker 30 yards short of the 6th green. The ball finished so close to the face that he could only just get it out and a six was the result. A redeeming birdie was needed and the 7th, only 402 yards and downwind, looked an obvious place to get it.

Half an hour earlier, Woods had driven into the bunker here five yards short of the green. He splashed out to five feet and then, as he sometimes does, hurled the at the hole and saw it run four past. He got that one in but there was an anger welling up which pressed itself at the next, the famous Postage Stamp.

Woods has an occasional ness with the short irons and the championship started it was dicted this hole might be his fall. It was — a triple-bogey six.

Woods was, by now, one less Parnevik to worry about, but the middle of the 7th fairway Swede's second was too struck. It was going to finish back of the green but hit the fluttering at the top of the ball dropped, gift-wrapped, from the hole to take Parnevik under.

He needed every ounce of he could get, for ahead Leonard producing some prodigious The American had done well at earlier holes — on the long pitched to three feet, on the went even closer and on the second stopped five feet away birdies.

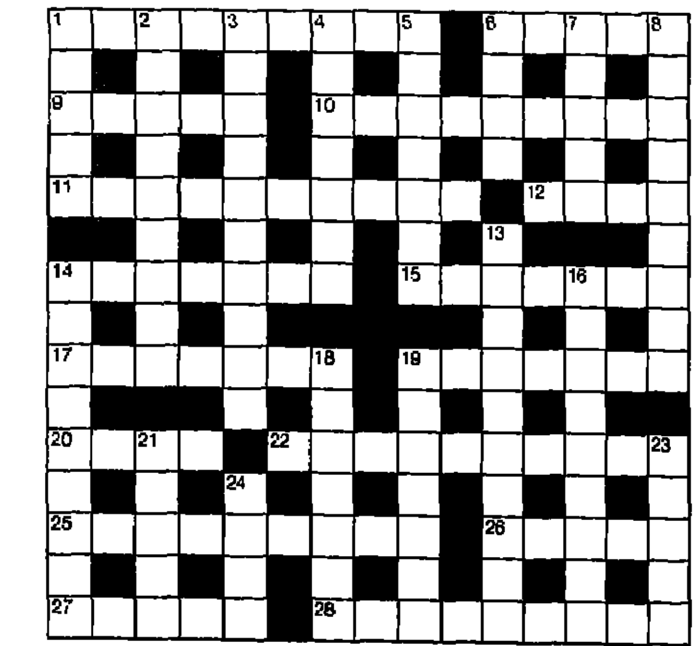
But from then on Leonard's escapology defied He dropped a shot at the he missed the green but at the he holed from 10 feet for after hitting a chip fat, at the chipped dead after missing green and at the 15th he got lucky.

His second missed the leaving him 30 yards from and in among the Coke cans He was allowed to place the cause a spectator had moved it but even then his ished 18 feet short. In went putt again and up went his in salute — the only emotion lowed himself until the presentation ceremony.



Tastes good . . . Justin Leonard kisses the trophy PHOTO: FRANK BARON

Cryptic crossword by Crispa



Across

1 Stand for heartless rogue getting handout (9)
6 Stick by Oriental (5)
9 Deposit put on a casual jacket (5)
10 Neat figure — fruit intake is responsible for it (9)
11 A cold diet's awfully out of place (10)
12 Withdrew labour (4)
14 Desert people struggle to make progress (3,4)
15 Pen article for example backing a seaside resort (7)
17 States small change in school appears questionable (7)
19 No, no! It's new ideas that are wanted (7)
20 Others take life easy (4)
22 The German put inside aiming to be devious (10)
25 Being disrespectful about the Right is not wise (9)
26 Open a page at random (5)
27 Some bars set one's teeth on edge (5)
28 Realise this could mean arrest (9)

Down

1 Fleet for which the monarch paid out (6)
2 Hangers-on mounting a strike over places offered (9)
3 Disappeared, having proved a tea-break necessary (10)
4 Catch putting French in the gin (7)
5 They twist matched pairs without hesitation (7)
6 Face the cat! (4)
7 Risk a quarter accept (5)
8 The princess designated touching craft (9)
13 Such an individual's proclivity is revealing (10)
14 Holding back with military personnel helping (9)
16 Dislike shown for a retrogressive party in a note (9)
18 A woman has to adjust her seat (7)
19 Relentlessly making a point concerning road work (3-4)
21 The colour's very good in the main (5)
23 There's a certain craving for greenstuff after spring's end (5)
24 Some intruders are really offensive (4)

Last week's solution

B	O	W	S	H	O	T		H	A	L	F	C	U	T
E		I		I		O		A		O		R		H
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G		I		E		I		A		R		L		R
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Parnevik cruelly hunted down

Mike Selvey

IT COMES to something when two of the hundreds of spectators massed around the 17th green at this most testing of links are under the impression that the 126th Open Championship is about to be won by England's tight-head prop.

Justin Leonard, 25 years old, just might be the lowest profile golfer to win the title in decades — to British eyes anyway. This win, the £250,000 that goes with it and the untold millions that could follow will have raised his rating a few points, though.

Despite the seemingly impregnable position that Jesper Parnevik had built, there was always a chance that an American would win here. They always seem to. Eight years ago it was Mark Calcavecchia who emerged from the pack. Before that came the Toms, Watson in 1982 and Weiskopf in 1973, and back at the start of the sixties, Arnold Palmer. But Leonard? Everyone was guilty of underestimating him, but two wins in the States in the past two years, and years spent learning in the winds that whistle through the Lone Star state, pointed to better things.

To win he had to hunt down Parnevik and Darren Clarke and he did it so relentlessly on the front nine, and so stout-heartedly on the return, that it was almost cruel.

While Parnevik was all but treading water in the final out, Leonard was completing first nine in 31, a figure not bettered all week. Then he clung on, rolling in putt after outrageous putt with a display of scrambling that almost defied belief.

There have been other final rounds that can be called great: Greg Norman's 64 at Royal St George's four years ago, Seve's extraordinary surge at Lytham in 1988, Watson's Turnberry head-to-head with Jack Nicklaus in 1977 and Henry Cotton's famous 65 at Sandwich that lent its name to a golf ball.

No new ball will be christened in honour of this round, however. It was too goddamn ... sensible. Competent it may have been, terrific even, but it will elevate Leonard to the pantheon. Parnevik, Clarke and everyone else were cut to ribbons by Leonard's putter.

When it comes to the last round of a Major championship all putts are vital, but it was, three hours and 25 minutes into his round, that Leonard sank the most telling putt of his life.

He had long since overhauled Clarke but a glance at the leader board had confirmed that the 15ft birdie putt he rolled up at the 16th had brought him abreast of Parnevik. The pressure finally told on the Swede, whose round ended with two tired bogeys.

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Middle East talks poised to restart

Julian Borger in Jerusalem

ISRAELI and Palestinian negotiators announced on Monday that the peace implementation talks — frozen for the past four months — would resume within a week, after the Israeli government suspended a plan to build a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

Israeli officials hailed the announcement as a breakthrough, but a senior Palestinian official, Saeb Erekat, was more cautious.

For the thaw in relations to last, Mr Erekat said, the Israeli government would have to end construction work on all Jewish settlements in Palestinian areas.

The Israeli foreign minister, David Levy, and the Palestinian planning minister, Nabil Shaath, met on Monday in Jerusalem and issued a joint statement saying that bilateral committees would restart work on resolving outstanding issues from the Oslo peace accords. Co-ordination between the two sides' security forces would also continue.

"We are deciding to return to the talks . . . out of a desire to restore mutual trust," Mr Levy said.

Speaking for the Palestinian Authority, Mr Shaath said: "We feel that maybe if we exchange confidence-building measures, it will make it easier to tackle these difficult issues in a short time."

The meeting appeared to be part of a concerted push towards breaking the impasse. The United States negotiator, Dennis Ross, is expected to return to the Middle East later this month with a new package of proposals.

Talks broke down in March after work began on the Jewish settlement of Har Homa on a hill in the Arab sector of Jerusalem. Construction, which is still under way, ignited weeks of West Bank rioting.

The granting of a building permit last week for another Jewish settlement in the densely populated Palestinian district of Ras al-Amud threatened to kill the peace process entirely.

But the interior ministry said that the permit had been suspended until at least August 5, when an appeal is due to be heard against the project.

An Israeli foreign ministry official said the suspension of the settlement's permit had "helped create a different atmosphere" in Monday's meeting. He said the imminent arrival of the US special envoy had also played a part. "In the past, both sides have shown they prefer their own solutions to solutions being imposed from outside," the official said.

However, Mr Erekat said that the Palestinians had so far received no undertaking that work would stop on Har Homa. Until then, he said, substantive talks aimed at moving the peace process forward — rather than implementing what has already been agreed — could not take place.

"The only indicator that the peace talks are back on track is for the government of Israel to stop its settlement policy. We hope the Americans will take into account this criterion when they come," he said.

Palestinian sources have suggested that Mr Ross may propose a six-month moratorium on construction work at Har Homa. This would probably be acceptable as a starting point to the Palestinians, but it has so far been rejected by Israel's prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu.

A spokesman for Mr Netanyahu, David Bar-Illan, said: "We feel that Har Homa doesn't belong in the Oslo equation. It's a construction project. It's not mentioned in the accords . . . So I don't think there's a possibility of a freeze or ending of construction."

Palestinians view the construction of settlements, which involve the deployment of army garrisons to protect the settlers, as an attempt to pre-empt a final settlement.

Finance, page 19



The first pictures of Pol Pot to be seen in the West for 18 years, shown on television in the United States on Monday night, as he answered to Khmer Rouge prosecutors in a show trial *(Full story, page 3)*

Indonesia arms sales to go ahead

Ian Black and Richard Norton-Taylor

FURIOUS protests erupted this week over the British government's decision to permit the sale of Hawk jets and armoured cars to Indonesia despite new guidelines restricting future weapons exports to countries with poor human rights records.

Announcing tougher arms controls, the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, made clear that contracts signed before Labour's election victory would be honoured. "It is not practical to backdate these new criteria to apply to decisions on licences already taken by the previous administration," he said.

Opponents of the decision charged the Government with failing the first test of its "ethical foreign policy".

Ann Clwyd, Labour MP for Cynon Valley, chair of the parliamentary human rights group, and one of more than 100 Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs demanding a ban on arms sales to Indonesia, said she was "extremely disappointed". Carmel Budiardjo, of the Indonesian human rights campaign, Tapol, was "absolutely appalled".

Mr Cook insisted he had to strike a balance. "Britain is one of the largest arms exporters in the world," he said in a statement. "That leading position obliges us to take seriously the reputation of the arms trade. Success and responsibility go hand in hand."

In a separate move, the export of torture equipment, including electric shock batons, stun guns and shackles, was banned completely.

Officials refused to say how many of the 20,000 export licences issued in the past two years would not in future be approved, insisting that all applications would be considered individually.

Indonesia, fighting a bloody war against Timorese independence, will be able to buy $260 million worth of Hawk trainers, 50 Alvis armoured cars worth £25 million as well as Tactica water cannon. The Government claims there is no evidence that the aircraft have been used against the rebels. Even under the new criteria Hawks could still be sold to the Jakarta regime, though the water cannon and armoured cars would not because of their "obvious application for internal repression".

Behind this week's decision lies the massive weight of Britain's defence manufacturing sector, with 90,000 jobs out of a total of 360,000 dependent solely on exports, according to official figures.

Last year Britain had a 25 per cent slice of the world arms market, earning $8.3 billion. Sales to Indonesia alone totalled $710 million.

Comment, page 12

Albright bluntly denounces Burma regime

Keith B Richburg in Kuala Lumpur

THE US secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, unleashed a blistering attack on Burma's military government, describing it as a repressive, unrepresentative regime that profits from illicit narcotics trafficking, and she challenged other southeast Asian countries to open a dialogue with Burma's harassed political opposition.

Ms Albright's remarks were delivered last Sunday during a closed-door meeting of 21 foreign ministers from major Asian and Western nations in the Malaysian capital. Usually accustomed to a more low-key, consensual style in these yearly talking sessions, some ministers were taken aback by the bluntness of Ms Albright's critique.

One southeast Asian diplomat who sat in on the session later described Ms Albright's remarks as "really brutal". He said the Burmese foreign minister, U Ohn Gyaw, sat stony-faced throughout Ms Albright's denunciation of his regime.

The diplomat, however, said that many of the Asian diplomats present, constrained by their traditional reluctance openly to criticise neighbours, privately said they were glad to see Ms Albright take the lead and shared her frustration at the slow pace of democratisation in Burma and the junta's continuing repression.

"The Asean countries are not blind," said the official, referring to the nine-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which sponsored last Sunday's forum — and admitted Burma and Laos as Asean members last week. "They are not unaware that the people in [Burma] need to be shaken up a little bit, and they are quite happy someone is doing it."

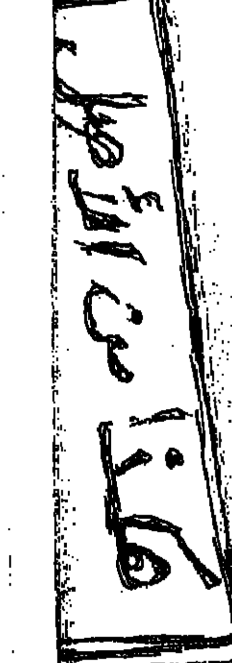
The military government in Burma took power in 1988. The regime allowed multi-party elections two years later, but ignored the results after being trounced by the opposition National League for Democracy, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, who was then under house arrest.

Ms Albright initially had not intended to make the remarks verbally, said the US state department spokesman, Nicholas Burns, but Ms Albright was angered at a presentation by Ohn Gyaw in which he glossed over Burma's human rights record and presented a picture of the country that one US aide described as "Orwellian".
— *The Washington Post*

Asean anxiety, page 15

Pacific boils over Australian leak 5
Another day, another execution 6
Blueprint for Scots' self-rule 10
India recalls its bitter division 23
Children stunted by culture of fear 24

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4 75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6 50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 450	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3 30



Painful cost of the milk of human unkindness

CONGRATULATIONS on George Monbiot's devastating critique (Agribusiness uncowed by animal suffering, July 20). Sadly, not only are cows in Britain being pushed painfully to their limits, but they also undergo an annual trauma when their newly born calves are taken away. Hell for both. As for the male calves born in the dairy herd — it used to be the veal crates of France or the Netherlands. Since the beef export ban, it's been the Calf Processing Aid Scheme, which pays a goodly sum (of taxpayers' money) to have the calves slaughtered before they are three weeks old. Their meat can go to feed pets or maggots.
Joyce D'Silva,
Compassion in World Farming,
Petersfield, Hampshire

GEORGE Monbiot demonstrates a total misunderstanding and misinterpretation of statistics. He rightly points out that mastitis has been a significant problem in the British dairy herd, but fails to explain that it has reduced in recent years as a response to successful preventive medicine programmes. Similarly, lameness has been addressed. This problem can be virtually eradicated in farms through improvements in housing and management.

To say that these problems have been caused by the pursuit of higher milk production is untrue. Indeed, most cows respond to the better health and welfare afforded to them by preventive medicine programmes by producing more milk more efficiently.
Richard Sibley (Veterinary surgeon),
Tiverton, Devon

SOME of George Monbiot's misleading article requires an answer. Somatic cells originate from infections of the cow's udder as a result of a group of bacterial pathogens which give rise to this form of mastitis. Regular inspection of cows in a dairy herd are made by stockmen, and, at the time of each milking, checks are made for the telltale clots indicative of clinical mastitis, which is usually identified well before milking. Any cow suffering from this infection must be milked separately and the milk discarded.

Treatment is by the use of antibiotics, and strict regulations apply dictating that the cow may not be milked for human use until three days have elapsed from the last antibiotic treatment.

All samples of milk are regularly tested for the level of somatic cells by the milk processors. The standard for somatic cells was tightened by a European Union directive relatively recently.
(Dr) Nigel Wade,
Dalrymple, Scotland

I WAS SO horrified by the revelations in George Monbiot's article that I have cancelled my milk deliveries and will now make tea and porridge without this contaminated product (it also contains Lindane residue, 25 per cent, according to Britain's agriculture ministry).

I intend to disseminate the contents of the article widely among my friends and include it in the book I am writing about behavioural effects from chemical additives in food and drink.
Duncan Cross,
Wolverhampton

Small scruples make big profits

INTERESTING to compare the materialist West's scruples about Beijing's repossession of historically Chinese Hong Kong with its decades of silence over the occupation of historically independent but economically insignificant Tibet.

As your editorial (July 6) rightly underlines, the future of 6 million Hong Kongers is far more important than the exact hour of sunset on the British Empire. What we are also witnessing in the repossession of Hong Kong, though, is the final dissolution of the old capitalist/communist dichotomy, and the consolidation of a pan-materialist, pan-corporativist consensus. The next century's geopolitical struggle will be global corporativism vs cultural diversity and autonomy; as this becomes more clearly recognised, might Tibet become more newsworthy?
Robert Valerio,
Oaxaca, Mexico

VINOTH Ramachandra's description (July 13) of Hong Kong being, for much of its history, "a gigantic sweat-shop with no labour unions, primitive labour laws and a censored media" would seem to me to be an accurate description of mainland China today. To whom should Britain apologise?
John Johnson,
Heaton Chapel, Stockport

HERE in Honiara, Chinese products are some of the shoddiest, shortest-lived rubbish that it has been my misfortune to buy. No surprise when you consider the factory and labour conditions under which they are produced for the nepotistical profit of the Communist Party leaders.

Can it be for this that we condone cultural genocide, torture and imprisonment in Tibet and lack of human rights, political and religious freedom throughout China? Not to mention totally unnecessary displacement of domestic manufacturing in other countries through offshore production in Chinese sweatshops. We don't need to follow the Clinton administration and myopic capitalists who want to trade with the devil in China because of the huge market opportunities there or lower production costs.

If Burma deserves a boycott, as it surely does, then on moral and political grounds China deserves it in spades.
Christopher Chevalier,
Honiara, Solomon Islands

Restrictions of uncivil servants

SO, SENIOR civil servants are doing their best to obstruct the mandate given to Britain's new government for a Freedom of Information Act (Information bill "on hold", July 20)? Hardly surprising, but clear proof — if still needed — of the need for cultural change inside the Civil Service which only a strong and effective Act will bring. Are not public servants required to facilitate government actions made on our behalf?

The present culture sustains an attitude of evasion and "economy with the truth" whenever something goes awry, often with the aim of shielding erring civil servants from exposure and discipline. Why should they not be held responsible, just like other professionals with equivalent positions in industry and other organisations which have an impact on the community?

Accountability, facilitated by an Act, is essential for ethically proper and efficient management of public affairs in this age of democracy. There can be no compromise, for the mandarins would win and the result would be a neutered Act.

How right was Thomas Jefferson. How much better their Freedom of Information Act serves the greater democracy of the United States.
(Dr) C T Blood,
Woldingham, Surrey

Clinton's hot air on emissions

SO PRESIDENT Clinton pledges to mobilise United States public opinion behind legally binding global targets for reducing emissions (Clinton evades US gas pledge July 6). He will succeed in that as long as "global" is everywhere except the US. He knows that a tax on fuel will be his biggest vote loser, and therefore we can expect no developments in that area unless he gets help from outside.

Fortunately, it is not difficult to provide such help. The low fuel taxes in the US are more than just an environmental threat, but they make for a very unlevel playing field in international trade. Fuel taxation within European Union countries is generally much higher than in the US. This means that European goods are made uncompetitive relative to US goods.

Since the US has in the past never hesitated to slap on hefty tariffs against imported goods when they do not like the conditions under which they were manufactured, they have set a precedent that could be very useful, if applied against them, in solving Mr Clinton's problem. If he will not collect a fuel tax, let us collect it instead.
Robert Bywater,
Helsingborg, Sweden

No smoke could lead to fire

THE scariest article I've read in the Guardian Weekly is "Tobacco firms agree settlement" (June 29). It's the portent that worries me. No nicotine by 2009 means something will have taken its place. I'm not sure what this thing will be but I suspect it will not be a benign healthy material, such as Hershey Bars, that a large widespread industry can profit from.

It's no good pretending that weeding out tobacco and blowing away the smoke will make the world a healthy place. I accept that smoking is bad for you, but having once smoked for 35 years I can also say that I enjoyed it. If my world had been one where cigarettes were not available but a world, as now, where there is an abundance of "worse" alternatives, then I'm not at all sure I would be here writing this letter.

Short of gene manipulation, human weaknesses and diversity fortunately will persist for ever despite efforts to eradicate them by well meaning zealots. Cigarettes are a curse; let's hope we're not making a big mistake by ostracising them together with those poor souls weak enough to fall under their allure.
Michael Hutchison,
Melbourne, Australia

Briefly

FREDERIC Chambon (Multi-racial alliance aims to challenge ANC, June 22) makes the astonishing statement that Roelf Meyer has set about "creating South Africa's first non-racial political entity". The origins, history, constitution and manifest current practice of the ANC all give witness to its non-racial character. While Messrs Meyer, Holomisa, etc, are entitled to start another non-racial political entity, they are not entitled to lay claim to being the first.
Francis Johnston,
Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

IF I WERE a resident in the UK and a British national to boot, I'd find it rather odd that increasing numbers of money values concerning purely local activities are expressed in "$" rather than in "£". In one recent issue I was amazed to read of a 32 cents increase in gas rates somewhere in England. The pound sterling is apparently being edged out firmly but not gently.

Though not nostalgic for the good old £ s d, florins and half-crowns I used to juggle with in my youth, I take it that in the UK one can be both a europhobe and a dollarphile.
B Cordova,
Saint-Cloud, France

I WAS not aware, until I read your article, "Priests serve no earthly employer" (July 20), that God had a bank account.
Sheila Ross,
Brooklyn, New York, USA

THE United States has imposed its choice of United Nations secretary-general and its choice of new members of Nato against the united opposition of the European countries involved. Now the European Union has accepted the formation of the Boeing/McDonnell Douglas juggernaut as a *fait accompli*, to the certain disadvantage of Europe and so-called global competition. Together with the success of McDonald's in the libel suit, it is very clear that the US drive for world domination is very much on track. When will Europe wake up?
J A Smith,
Le Douhet, France

WHEN the British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, refers to "the Europeans" (July 20) presumably he means "the other Europeans" besides the British. He could just say "all those who button up their jackets", and by this it would be understood that it excludes the British, who believe an overhanging beer belly is a thing of beauty to be shown off at all times.
Frank Nowikowski,
Buenos Aires, Argentina

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Moi's foes join together in protest rally

Lucy Hannan in Nairobi

OPPOSITION parties in Kenya managed to hold a legal and peaceful rally last weekend for the first time since reform campaigners started mass action in June. Reform advocates refused to apply for a licence for the rally in Mombasa, but the government issued a permit to neutralise the stand-off.

Small groups of government supporters carrying clubs were chased from the meeting, but government security forces — responsible for the bloody dispersal of previous rallies with 11 deaths — were notably absent.

Opposition leaders stirred up the crowd of several thousand by referring to President Daniel arap Moi as "Moi-butu" — an insulting reference to the deposed former Zairean president Mobutu.

They demanded constitutional reforms to reduce the power of Mr Moi, who has been in office for 19 years.

The official opposition leader, Michael Wamalwa, said pressure on the government should increase "until President Moi cracks".

Opposition leaders put on a united and confident front in Mombasa for the first time since multiparty politics were introduced in 1991, although they avoided contentious issues such as whether to take part in forthcoming general elections. A growing camp says the polls should be boycotted or disrupted. James Orengo, the deputy leader of the opposition, who has pushed a rhetoric of battle since riots last month, said the reform movement should give President Moi a deadline of 30 days. He added: "I will be in the front row if we have to take up arms."

President Moi has regained ground by promising dialogue with reformists and looks set to win the election. His recent promises to review contentious laws and set up a commission for constitutional reform have increased divisions among the opposition.

Critics see President Moi's promises as a time-buying exercise. Wachira Maina, an economic analyst, said the president's priority was "to have peaceful elections and get back into power". International condemnation of the brutal dispersal of unlicensed reform rallies led Britain and the International Monetary Fund to review aid.



German soldiers moving sandbags last week to shore up a dyke protecting Frankfurt-on-Oder from the rising flood waters. Thousands of troops battled with the elements as the river burst through flood barriers and drowned villages, forcing the evacuation of more than 10,000 people PHOTO: JOCHEN ECKEL

Show trial of broken Pol Pot

Nick Cumming-Bruce in Bangkok and Ed Vulliamy in Washington

WHITE-HAIRED, sick and barely able to walk, Pol Pot, architect of Cambodia's holocaust, shuffled to his own trial by former loyalists of his Khmer Rouge movement a physically and spiritually broken man.

The first images of Pol Pot to be seen outside Cambodia for more than 18 years were broadcast on US television on Monday.

US journalist Nate Thayer became the first Westerner to see Pol Pot in almost two decades when Khmer Rouge contacts led him from the Thai border to the guerrillas' last major base of Anlong Veng in northern Cambodia.

He and a cameraman found and filmed the leader whose name is synonymous with genocide, now a prisoner of his former followers and in the process of being purged in what Mr Thayer describes as "a classic 1960s Cultural Revolution-style show trial".

Pol Pot sat silent but visibly anguished as a succession of speakers denounced him before a crowd of around 500 villagers in what looked like a jungle clearing. The tyrant had a faraway look in his eyes, appearing only vaguely aware of the proceedings.

"Crush, crush, crush Pol Pot and his clique," chanted the crowd.

The trial proved so "traumatic" for the 69-year-old, who sent thousands to hideous torture and execution in his purges, "that I thought he might die during the process," Mr Thayer reported.

Pol Pot walked on to the stage with the help of a bamboo cane. "You could see the anguish on his face as he was denounced by his former loyalists. He was close to tears," Mr Thayer, of the Hong Kong-based Far Eastern Economic Review, said.

Pol Pot stands accused before the world of causing the deaths of 2 million Cambodians by execution, overwork, starvation and disease in a four-year reign of terror. But even now he seems in no danger of falling into the hands of international prosecutors.

In the trial, Khmer Rouge leaders denounced Pol Pot and three commanders for the execution of his former security chief Son Sen in June, for "destroying national reconciliation" and for stealing party funds. Pol Pot's commanders, described as "drunk and corrupt", were also charged with raping the wives of colleagues.

Witnesses in military fatigues took turns to burst forth passionate testimony on Pol Pot's guilt and thirst for torture and murder. The crowd's participation was limited to sudden outbursts of carefully choreographed indignation.

The official presiding over the trial announced that Pol Pot and his henchmen had been sentenced to life imprisonment but, according to Mr Thayer, said they would not be handed over to an international court.

Although the trial was an elaborate piece of political theatre, Cambodia experts are convinced it spells the end of almost 40 years of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge leadership.

It is not yet, however, the end of the Khmer Rouge as a highly volatile player in Cambodia's power struggles. The rupture came in the course of talks with royalist leaders in Phnom Penh on the terms of a deal under which the Khmer Rouge would give up armed rebellion, recognise the constitution and enter politics in a broad front under the co-prime minister, Prince Norodom Ranariddh.

In June it seemed Pol Pot would be allowed to escape Cambodia and go into exile. However, for reasons that are not clear but may reflect resistance outside Cambodia, the arrangement collapsed. After he ordered the execution of Son Sen — apparently for pursuing contacts with the second prime minister, Hun Sen — Pol Pot fled and was reportedly brought back, sick and a prisoner.

Hun Sen dismissed the trial as "a political game of the Khmer Rouge". Pol Pot, he said, "is still the leader of the Khmer Rouge forces". As Cambodia's now unrivalled political strongman, he has an interest in holding this line, analysts note.

Hun Sen used the royalist negotiations with the Khmer Rouge as a justification for his overthrow of Prince Ranariddh last month.

Italy hands out sentences to ex-Nazis

Philip Willan in Rome

AN ITALIAN military tribunal sentenced two former Nazis to prison sentences last week for their role in Italy's worst wartime atrocity, ending what may be one of the last big trials for crimes against humanity during the second world war.

Former SS captain Erich Priebke, aged 84, was given 15 years for his role in the 1944 Ardeatine Caves massacre, in which 335 Italians were shot dead. Karl Hass, a former SS major, also 84, was given 10 years and eight months for his part in the massacre. The judge ordered 10 years of each sentence to be commuted, resulting in Hass's immediate release.

"We must not forget that a 15-year sentence, reduced to five years, in the case of an 84-year-old man has a high symbolic significance," Tullia Zevi, a leader of Rome's Jewish community, said. The community lost 75 people in the massacre.

Rome's chief rabbi, Elio Toaff, was less satisfied. "I am disappointed that there has been no clear condemnation of the Nazi ideology that these people represented and that is on the rise again in too many parts of Europe," he said.

Priebke and Hass admitted taking part in the massacre, ordered by Adolf Hitler as a reprisal for an Italian partisan bomb attack that killed 33 South Tyrolean soldiers as they marched through central Rome.

For Priebke, who was extradited from Argentina in 1994, the trial was a re-run of an earlier hearing which ended in his acquittal and in tumult. On that occasion, a year ago, the military court ruled that there were mitigating circumstances and that that the crime was covered by the statute of limitations.

Hundreds of people laid siege to the courtroom until Giovanni Maria Flick, the justice minister, announced that Priebke was being rearrested pending an extradition request from Germany.

For Hass, who collaborated with the CIA and Italy's secret service after the second world war, the trial was an unpleasant surprise.

After he was called as a witness at Priebke's trial in June 1996, he fell and broke a hip while trying to flee from his hotel room via the balcony. From his hospital bed a week later he admitted shooting two people in the massacre but insisted, like Priebke, that he had been obeying orders.

The prosecutor, Antonino Intelisano, who also represented the state in the first trial, sought a life sentence for Priebke and 24 years imprisonment for Hass, but he described the sentences as "just in all respects".

Priebke's lawyers argued that he should not have been on trial because he had already been acquitted of the crime. "A shot in the back of the head is not cruel," Giosue Naso told the court, adding that the sentence was "an Italian solution, a solution of compromise".

The Week

THE US air force chief of staff, General Ronald Fogelman, has submitted his resignation amid differences over responsibility for security lapses that led to the deaths of 19 US airmen in a bombing in Saudi Arabia last year.

A HONG KONG appeals court crushed a challenge to the arrangements that have been in place since China resumed sovereignty and dismissed a claim that pre-handover laws had ceased to be valid. It said it had no power to rule on the legality of the provisional legislature installed by China on July 1.

REXHEP Medjani was elected president of Albania after Sali Berisha finally resigned following his party's defeat in the June elections.

NEARLY 100,000 US troops may have been exposed to low levels of nerve gas as a result of the demolition of an Iraqi ammunition depot after the Gulf war, according to the Pentagon and the CIA.

FRANCE is planning to reduce its military presence in Africa by almost half in an historic foreign policy shift that experts point to as proof of Paris's dwindling influence there.
Le Monde, page 13

REBELLIOUS soldiers seized the commander of the Papua New Guinea defence force at his Port Moresby home and demanded amnesty for their role in a mutiny in March.

NINE people were killed when a plane flown by a Jordanian air force pilot crashed at the Ostend airshow in Belgium during a low-level solo display.

PAK Dong Tchoun, head of North Korea's diplomatic mission to France, said his country needed up to 2.4 million tonnes in food aid to prevent its people from starving.

THREE people were shot dead by soldiers in Kinshasa during a protest by nearly 1,000 opponents of the ban by President Laurent Kabila on political activity, witnesses said.

REPUBLICANS in Congress and White House officials announced tentative agreement on a plan to balance the US budget by 2002 while slashing taxes for millions of families, students and investors.

DORA MAAR, a painter and photographer who was Pablo Picasso's mistress, has died, aged 90.

MOHAMMED Mahdi Al-Jawahri, a renowned Iraqi poet, died in Damascus, aged 97.

Rwanda governor 'led genocide'

Chris McGreal in Kigali

RWANDA'S parliament is demanding that the government arrest a prominent Hutu politician who was appointed as a regional governor despite his inclusion on the administration's own list of suspects wanted for the 1994 genocide of Tutsis.

Boniface Rucagu is 120th on the list of about 2,000 people who could face the death penalty for organising the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of victims. President Pasteur Bizimungu says Mr Rucagu's inclusion is a mistake.

Survivors of the genocide are furious. They say there is ample evidence that Mr Rucagu not only took part in but helped plan the mass murder, and that he was appointed governor of Ruhengeri province two months ago to quell unrest among Hutus.

Deus Kagiraneza, one of a number of genocide survivors who are now MPs, submitted a bill demanding Mr Rucagu's removal from office and arrest. "His appointment was a blunder," he said. "The survivors are angry because it is underrating the genocide. The position of the president is that someone is innocent until proven guilty. But that isn't good enough."

Before the genocide, Mr Rucagu was an MP in the extremist ruling party, the MRND, which laid the ground for the killing. He claims to have opposed the slaughter.

"There is no evidence I did anything. I was trying to tell people not to kill. I was opposed to killing. I put my own life in danger to try and stop it," he said.

Mr Rucagu's case is undermined by his virulently anti-Tutsi writings in the Hutu extremist newspaper Kangura, which predicted the genocide. He was a founding shareholder of Radio Mille Collines, which broadcast some of the most inflammatory exhortations to kill.

The interior minister, Sheikh Karim Harerimana, told MPs: "There is no concrete evidence Rucagu committed genocide. We believe he was included on the list by mistake. But if evidence against Rucagu were to be provided he will be dealt with like other killers."

Among those prepared to testify against Mr Rucagu is a former governor of Gitarama province who says he saw him kill six people. An MP is prepared to swear he saw him give a speech in Gitarama urging people to murder Tutsis.

Mr Rucagu has been arrested, questioned and freed three times in the past two years.

His final release came after his wife produced letters apparently written to the president of the former regime pleading for an end to the genocide. Mr Kagiraneza maintains the letters are fake.

● A Belgian accused of making broadcasts inciting violence against Tutsis has been arrested in Kenya in connection with the genocide in Rwanda.

Georges Ruggiu, formerly a reporter on the state-owned radio station Radio Mille Collines, is alleged to have made many broadcasts in French inciting violence and hatred against Tutsis, moderate Hutus and Belgian nationals, the United Nations tribunal for Rwanda said last week.

Drugs tarnish Mexican army's image

Phil Gunson in Mexico City

A NEW drugs scandal involving senior officers in the Mexican army has added to suspicions about the country's controversial policy of using the armed forces to fight the drugs war.

The news magazine Proceso last week published confidential documents revealing alleged links between at least six former high-ranking officers and drugs cartels.

The defence ministry said in a communiqué that two officers had been charged with copying onto a computer disk the secret documents the magazine had reproduced. The ministry added that it did not "pre-judge [the] veracity" of the information passed to Proceso.

The documents are believed to be the result of an inquiry that began in February after the country's drugs tsar, General Jesús Gutiérrez Rebollo, was arrested and charged with taking million-dollar bribes from the since-deceased head of the Juárez cartel, Amado Carrillo Fuentes.

The documents include information dating back to 1991, which was apparently revealed that a large number of military personnel in Guadalajara — the zone commanded by Gen Gutiérrez — were involved with the drugs trade.

There are also intriguing references to an offer supposedly made by Carrillo to the government, in which he proposed behaving "as a businessman, not a criminal" in exchange for being allowed to keep half his properties and stay in the drugs business.

At least five colonels and a recently retired general are mentioned in the Proceso report. But the defence ministry says in the communiqué: "None of those referred to is presently carrying out any command duties in the Mexican army."

However, it adds: "This year alone, 34 military or ex-military personnel have been turned over to military or civilian judicial authorities on suspicion of involvement in, or collaboration with, drug-trafficking."

The armed forces have been increasingly drafted into the drugs fight after a high incidence of drug-related corruption was found in the Mexican police. Since 1990, the branch of the attorney-general's office devoted to the drugs war has been reorganised four times.

Vatican 'linked to Nazi gold'

Ed Vulliamy in Washington

PRESIDENT Clinton announced last week that the United States treasury department has launched an investigation into claims that the Vatican received money looted from Jewish and other victims of the Nazis during the second world war.

The Vatican vehemently denied the claims.

"The treasury department has assured me that they have historians combing the records and we will reveal whatever information we have and let the facts take us where they lead us," Mr Clinton said.

The White House statement followed the disclosure of a US intelligence report from 1946, which records that the British authorities impounded and kept gold coins worth 150 million Swiss francs looted from murdered Jews and Serbs by the pro-Nazi regime that ruled Croatia from 1941 to 1945.

The sum was part of 350 million francs worth of gold looted by the Croats. The rest, the report says, was given for safekeeping to the Vatican, which may have set up a "smokescreen", pretending to forward the gold to Spain and Argentina while really keeping it.

The Vatican denied that it had been a "pipeline" for storing and smuggling Nazi gold.

The consignment intercepted by the British was seized on the Austro-Swiss border, apparently in autumn 1946. There is no indication of where the treasure went after it was impounded by the British authorities patrolling the border.

The gold was looted by the Ustasha government of Ante Pavelic, a fascist ruler loyal to Adolf Hitler. The Ustasha set up a concentration camp at Jasenovac for Jews, Serbs, Gypsies and dissident Croats.

● In an attempt to help relatives of Nazi victims lay claim to their assets, the Swiss banks last week published a list of 2,000 dormant accounts in newspapers around the world.

Comment, page 12
Washington Post, page 16

An Orthodox Church priest in Sevastopol, Ukraine, baptises a new believer in the Black Sea PHOTOGRAPH: SERGEI SVETLITSKY

Versace killer commits suicide

Ed Vulliamy in Washington and John Hooper in Rome

"THE reign of terror that was brought upon us by Andrew Cunanan is over," announced the Miami Beach police chief, Richard Barreto, last week, closing one of the the biggest manhunts in the United States.

Police marksmen had stormed a houseboat and found the body of Gianni Versace's murderer. Cunanan had shot himself in the head, police said.

One FBI officer described Mr Barreto's statement as "the highest-ranking sigh of relief I've heard for a while".

The corpse of the US's most wanted man was found by Swat agents through a dense haze of tear gas and concussion-grenade fumes. The discovery of the body followed a five-hour siege after a shot was fired from within the houseboat at a caretaker who went to investigate after spotting a stranger.

No shots were fired by police, only a salvo of concussion grenades and tear gas to make way for agents to burst into the houseboat. Police said it had taken some time to find the body because of fumes inside the boat.

A pistol found beside Cunanan's lifeless hand was later confirmed as the .40 calibre handgun that killed Versace and two of Cunanan's other victims. Police said there was no suicide note.

The gunshot to the head made identification difficult, police sources said, but confirmation came after a thumbprint was matched with police files.

The manhunt ended just 5km from where it had begun on the steps of the murdered designer's palazzo.

Mr Barreto said he was not surprised that his quarry had moved only a short distance from the crime scene. "He made it 40 blocks from the original scene. There was terrific pressure on him from law enforcement, media exposure and public vigilance. I think he was a desperate person; it was very difficult for him to move about."

Milosevic vows to play fair at polls

Jonathan Steele

BASKING in his new role as Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic last week promised opposition politicians that he would guarantee free and fair conditions for the September elections in Serbia.

Despite last winter's street protests, which forced Mr Milosevic to concede his party's defeat in local polls, the Serbian strongman has made a remarkable comeback and remains a key power-broker in the Balkans.

The Zajedno (Together) coalition, which led the protests, has yet to make a decisive mark in Belgrade and the other cities it won. Opposition parties are still considering whether to boycott the poll. Mr Milosevic sidestepped a constitutional bar on running for a third term as Serbian president by becoming Yugoslav federal president.

The federation is largely a fiction now that the tiny republic of Montenegro is the only component apart from Serbia. The four other constituent republics split off in 1991.

Mr Milosevic has ensured that the ineffectual former Yugoslav head of state, Zoran Lilic, was endorsed as the Socialist party's candidate for the Serbian presidency, allowing their political relationship to remain the same although their titles have been switched.

The elections will be for a new Serbian parliament, and for the presidency. Vuk Draskovic of the pro-monarchist Serbian Renewal party said after meeting Mr Milosevic that he had taken a "positive stand" on the opposition's call for free elections.

The opposition wants multiparty control over the process, international observers, equal access to state-run media, and the re-opening of scores of local radio stations which have been closed this year.

Despite the assurance, the official Tanjug news agency later reported the closure of three more radio and television stations.

● Serbian authorities in Kosovo charged 21 ethnic Albanians with belonging to a "hostile terrorist association", Tanjug reported. It said 18 of the accused were in custody and three at large. No trial date has been set.

Australian report causes row in Pacific

Christopher Zinn in Sydney

FURY over a leaked Australian government briefing paper which painted a damning picture of other South Pacific countries and their leaders shows no sign of abating. The document labelled some regional politicians corrupt, incompetent and belligerent drunkards.

Two senior New Zealand ministers have lashed the Canberra bureaucrats who drafted the scathing internal report for "Australian eyes only", marking them as "dingbat galahs" and "a pack of mongrels".

Australia's prime minister, John Howard, currently in hospital with pneumonia, has been warned to expect anger at the meeting of the 16-nation South Pacific Forum in September.

The Fijian prime minister, Sitiveni Rabuka, said the paper was a "show of disrespect", adding that it would almost certainly be aired at the gathering.

Reuter carried parts of the top-secret 96-page briefing paper last month. It had been picked up by chance by one of its journalists at an economic conference in Queensland.

The paper, prepared for Australia's treasurer, Peter Costello, called many Pacific politicians corrupt, mainly from taking bribes for logging. Others were said to be "temperamentally volatile" and "boastful and vain".

Sir Geoffrey Henry, prime minister of the Cook Islands and host of the next forum summit, was called a heavy drinker who had brought his country to the verge of bankruptcy. Sir Geoffrey said he was "surprised, bewildered and upset".

The formerly phosphate-rich island of Nauru and the Solomon Islands were also described as being close to collapse. Nauru's president, Kinza Clodumar, called the document "most insulting and patronising".

Australia has sent envoys to reassure its neighbours that the comments came from junior officials, not the government.

Mr Costello has admitted the report was "very deeply insulting" but refused to apologise formally for it. The Australian foreign minister, Alexander Downer, said the controversy would pass without lasting damage. But Australia's high commissioner to New Zealand, Geoffrey Miller, said the ramifications of the leak were potentially serious.

"I do not think this is the sort of thing that people will easily forget, and we will have to put up with the consequences of it for quite some time," he said.

The briefing said New Zealand's deputy prime minister, Winston Peters, had a reputation for "laziness, inattention to detail and erratic behaviour". But New Zealand's prime minister, Jim Bolger, said last week: "New Zealand and Australia have a relationship that is far too strong ... to be damaged because some officials wrote some nonsense."

However, the political fallout will compromise Australian attempts to push economic reform agendas in the region.

A spokesman for the government of the Solomon Islands said: "It makes South Pacific countries suspicious of what Australia gets up to."

US failed radioactive alert

Christopher Reed in Los Angeles

A CHEMICAL explosion at Hanford Nuclear Reservation in California, the western hemisphere's most polluted radioactive site, released plutonium and other toxins while emergency responses descended into chaos, a United States government report has disclosed.

Amid virtual media silence, the explosion took place on May 14 in a 400-gallon storage tank at the plutonium-processing facility, where chemicals had been improperly placed. The explosion blasted open the roof, releasing a toxic plume through the chimney that spilled plutonium-contaminated water outside the plant.

As emergency services broke down, workers were twice forced to walk through the toxic cloud and were later denied hospital treatment. Confused plant managers did not declare an alert for two hours, the plume was not tracked and some emergency services outside the plant were never notified.

Hanford, by the Columbia river in the Pacific northwest, produced the plutonium for the bomb dropped on Nagasaki in the second world war, and for many later nuclear weapons tests. Its 11 nuclear reactors now stand idle along the riverbank inside the fenced-off 362,000-acre site that has become a nightmare of leaking radioactivity.

People who live in the area have a disproportionately high rate of hyper-thyroid conditions and cancers, but legal action to decide on compensation has yet to be concluded. The May incident will increase anxiety about Hanford's radioactive "time bomb" of pollution and dangerous conditions.

The report was by the department of energy, assisted by the Fluor Daniel Hanford company that manages the site. It is extraordinarily frank in admitting errors.

"The findings are downright ugly and we failed in some key areas of responsibility," Lloyd Piper, the acting manager at Hanford, said.

Fluor was criticised for failing to conduct four-weekly inspections of the tank for six months before the blast. A company official said standards would improve, but a spokesman for a group representing workers who exposed inadequacies said: "I'm not sure they're going to be any more prepared next year."

● Recently declassified documents from the 1960s reveal that Washington, alarmed by Mao Zedong's drive to build a nuclear bomb, considered sending commandos and even heavy bombers to obliterate Beijing's atomic ambitions. An internal debate under President Kennedy and President Johnson reviewed a wide range of pre-emptive military strikes but in 1964 a decision was made against taking "unprovoked" action.



Death loses its sting in execution-happy US

WASHINGTON DIARY
Patrick Brogan

JAMES BALDWIN said, "Violence is as American as apple pie." So, nowadays, are executions. And, like apple pie, they are not newsworthy.

Joseph O'Dell was an exception because a group of Italian journalists championed his cause and incited the Pope and Mother Teresa, among many others, to plead for his life. When the State of Virginia put him to death last week, he made the papers (though not the television news).

Usually such events pass unnoticed in the United States, save for a single paragraph in the news round-up of the local paper. There have been 44 executions in the US this year, 24 of them in Texas. It is hard to stay interested. What is more, executions now are pretty pedestrian affairs. The less drama, the better, states have discovered.

Witnesses are brought into a room with a window into the execution chamber. They see a man on a stretcher, covered with a sheet, but all that is visible of him is his head and his arm with intravenous tubes hanging from it. They do not watch him being brought into the room, see him strapped to the stretcher, or witness the needles inserted into his veins.

Nothing apparently happens. He does not move, and after six minutes, the chief warden draws the curtain closed. The angel of death passes, but there is no way of telling.

Thirty-two states use lethal injection as their standard method of execution. A few still use the electric chair or the gas chamber (there have been two hangings and one execution by firing squad in the past 20 years).

Florida, an enthusiastic proponent of the death penalty, suspended all executions when the electric chair malfunctioned six months ago and a convict's head caught fire. A prison inquiry concluded that the prisoner had not suffered and that there was nothing wrong with "Old Sparky", as the chair is known. However, the odds are that public opinion will insist on quieter methods in future.

The pace of execution is picking up. Congress and the courts have eliminated many of the legal delays that have kept men on death row for decades. Prisoners can no longer appeal on the grounds of habeas corpus, and thus force appeals courts to examine new evidence, or new arguments.

Many courts, including a majority on the Supreme Court, want to hurry things along. So do states, for economic reasons. Because of the lengthy appeals procedure, it costs far more to execute a man than to keep him in prison for life. Reducing legal safeguards against mistakes saves money.

O'Dell claimed that he was innocent, and that a new technique of blood testing, invented since his conviction, would prove it. The courts, and the governor of Virginia, George Allen, rejected that argument.

I was once at a big dinner in Washington, attended by two members of the Supreme Court. Shortly after we all sat down, waiters whispered in their ears, and the two justices left their tables and vanished into a corridor where there was a telephone.

It was a conference call of the full court, to decide a last-minute appeal. They returned to the dinner unmoved. The appeal had been rejected, and the man was executed before dessert was served. I asked one of them how that affected his appetite. He replied that, like doctors, judges had to separate their humanity from their professional judgment. If they didn't, they could never sentence anyone to jail, let alone death.

Politicians love the death penalty. It proves that they are "tough on crime". During the 1992 presidential election, Bill Clinton, then governor of Arkansas, made a point of returning to Little Rock from the campaign trail so that he could refuse to commute a death sentence. The convicted man, who had a very low IQ, had blown away half his brains during the course of an attempted suicide. He had no understanding of what was happening to him: just before he was led away to be executed, he saved half his last breakfast, to eat later.

Opponents of the death penalty contend that there are many cases of men executed for crimes they did not commit. They point out that, since 1973, more than 65 people who had been given death sentences were subsequently released when their convictions were overturned. They were saved by the length of the appeals process: under the new dispensation, many of them would have been executed.

They also point to the grotesque incompetence of public defenders allocated to indigent defendants. One notorious 73-year-old lawyer in Texas is routinely given capital cases — and sleeps peacefully through the trial. The Texas court of appeal has ruled that this does not mean that the defendant is not properly represented: the US Constitution provides that a defendant must have a lawyer but says nothing about him staying awake.

A study in Philadelphia in 1992 found the quality of lawyers in capital cases so bad "that even officials in charge of the system said they would not want to be represented in Traffic Court by some of the people appointed to defend poor people accused of murder".

The US system of justice is based on the adversarial system. Two lawyers represent both sides of a case to the best of their ability — and the most persuasive is the one who convinces the jury. It is a system inherited from English common law and fills European lawyers with horror: under Roman law, the court's duty is to find the truth, not to supervise a gladiatorial contest between two lawyers.

Because most defendants in US courts are poor, they are often represented by lawyers who care nothing whatever for their clients. This may partly explain the huge disparity in death sentences between blacks and whites: almost as many blacks as whites are executed, even though they are outnumbered 10 to one by whites in the general population.

THESE ARE all good arguments against the death penalty. But diehard opponents also need to face the question of whether capital punishment is ever appropriate. There was some doubt about O'Dell, though he was undoubtedly a violent criminal.

The crime for which O'Dell was executed was the rape and murder of a young woman. According to the evidence presented to the court, he was in the same bar as her, left just after she did, and reappeared later covered in blood. Tyre tracks, similar to those made by his truck were found near her body.

He was alleged to have confessed his crime to a fellow prisoner — but the inmate later retracted the evidence. Semen taken from the dead girl appeared to be his, and blood on his clothing appeared to be hers. It is the validity of these tests that his supporters challenged in the last desperate hours of his life.

Perhaps he was innocent. But what about Timothy McVeigh? Can there really be any doubt that he set the bomb in Oklahoma City that killed 168 people? And what about the hundreds of violent and sadistic murderers whose guilt is beyond question?

Most Europeans have long since resolved that question and abolished the death penalty. That is why the Italians were so exercised about O'Dell: if you oppose capital punishment, the prospect of executing a man who may be innocent is horrifying.

The governor and the citizens of Virginia were not impressed. The US may be the last Western nation to have the death penalty — but in Virginia that merely means the rest of the world is wrong.

Martin Walker is on holiday



Italians gather for a vigil in Rome last week as the convicted killer and rapist Joseph O'Dell was about to be executed in Virginia
PHOTOGRAPH PAUL ...

Jury awards $120m against priest

Joanna Coles in New York

RUDOLPH KOS was always an odd choice to be ordained as a Catholic priest. He had once served a year's youth detention for molesting a young male neighbour. Then he was married for a year before persuading his diocese to grant him an annulment.

But last week the Roman Catholic Church reeled when a jury awarded $120 million in damages after finding the Dallas diocese had ignored evidence that Kos sexually abused altar boys as young as nine. It is the biggest award ever made against the Church.

The civil case was brought by 10 of Kos's alleged victims and the family of an 11th, Jay Lemberger, who committed suicide at the age of 22 after 10 years of abuse. Criminal proceedings against Kos are likely to follow.

The damages will be paid by both the Church and Kos, who now works as a paralegal in San Diego, California. It seems likely the Church will foot most of the bill as Kos says he is insolvent.

The alleged abuse began while Kos was a student at Holy Trinity seminary in Dallas, and continued during placements at three different churches. The Dallas diocese was found guilty of failing to take seriously scores of abuse allegations and a petition from Kos's ex-wife, Kathleen Herzel, drawing attention to his interest in young boys. Shortly after the first complaints he was promoted to pastor.

Randal Mathis, the diocese's lawyer, argued that church officials had used reasonable judgment in pursuing the complaints but said Kos was a "very convincing man".

After listening to 11 weeks of harrowing testimony, the jury disagreed. They found that one boy had been abused several times a week for several years, and another lived with Kos for two years in the priest's parish residence. Kos joked with friends that he had adopted the boy.

The plaintiffs had sought $146 million in damages to compensate for lost earnings and mental anguish. They were awarded $102 million for earnings and anguish and $18 million in punitive damages, after the jury found the church responsible for failing to act sooner.

Bill Ryan, a spokesman for the National Conference of Catholic Churches, said the case was "almost certainly the largest judgment ever made against the church". The organisation has appealed against the sum.

Fewer than 10 abuse cases have been brought against the Catholic Church in the US. The previous highest sum awarded was $3 million to a man in Minnesota, reduced to $1.2 million on appeal. Most churches are now insured against such eventualities.

The figure paid out in secret settlements is thought to be much higher, possibly exceeding $500 million. Jeffrey Anderson, a lawyer from St Paul, Minnesota, said he knew certain dioceses had paid out more than $50 million. He had represented more than 350 abuse victims.

"We've never been able to get [diocesan officials] to take these matters seriously," said Sylvia Demarest, the lawyer for one of the plaintiffs. "They maintained throughout the trial they were not in any way responsible for the activities of this priest."

● A Catholic priest extradited to the Irish Republic from Northern Ireland after serving time for child sex offences was sentenced to 12 years last week for further offences, *writes David Sharrock*.

Brendan Smyth, aged 70, was sentenced after a Dublin court heard harrowing evidence from some of the victims.

The "paedophile priest" case led to the collapse of Albert Reynolds's Fianna Fail-Labour coalition government in 1994 amid controversy over a six-month delay in extraditing him to Belfast to face sex charges there.

Judge Kelly said he had taken into account Father Smyth's guilty plea but remained fearful that he would "seriously sexually abuse" children again. He based this on psychiatric reports and Smyth's behaviour while on a sex offenders course in Northern Ireland.

Liberia's hollow democracy

COMMENT
Claudia McElroy

AFRICA'S oldest republic had free and fair elections for the first time in its 150-year history last month. Paradoxically, but not surprisingly, Charles Taylor, the man who eight years ago plunged Liberia into the bloodiest and most destructive civil war in West Africa since Biafra's attempt to secede from Nigeria, won a landslide victory in the presidential contest.

Mr Taylor, the self-styled freedom fighter-cum-megalomaniac warlord, finally gained the legitimacy he craved through the ballot box. He has subsequently been embraced not only by the majority of Liberians but also by his erstwhile foes, Nigeria and the United States, whose push for early elections was seen by many observers as potentially dangerous.

Predictably, Mr Taylor's rivals are crying foul. Mr Taylor did not, however, need to rig the elections. A powerful demagogue and propagandist, with enough ill-gotten wealth to shower voters with food and cash, Mr Taylor is held in fear and awe by a largely illiterate population. He holds the key to Liberia's destruction and, ironically, to its reconstruction.

After nearly eight years of war, most Liberians are more interested in stability than in democracy. No other former factional leaders or civilian presidential aspirants were seen as offering a viable alternative to Mr Taylor. Candidates' promises of peace and prosperity only thinly veiled the combination of greed, arrogance and crass hypocrisy that has accelerated Liberia's socio-economic decline in the past two decades. For many, Mr Taylor was a pragmatic choice — a choice based not on the lesser of evils but on the reasonable assumption that if he lost the elections he would make Liberia ungovernable.

In spite of his victory, hopes of lasting peace in Liberia seem a pipe dream. Factional and ethnic tensions continue across the country; the losers in the election are unlikely to accept Mr Taylor as president; Mr Taylor has a tendency to brutality and despotism; and only about half of the estimated 60,000 fighters in the country's civil war have been disarmed by Ecomog, the West African peacekeeping force.

So why did the international community — particularly the United States and Nigeria — insist that elections were the panacea for Liberia's ills? Each has an interest in being seen as a champion of democracy in Liberia. Nigeria, which has led Ecomog in Liberia since 1990, wants stability among its neighbours, and its head of state, General Sani Abacha, wants international kudos in the run-up to next year's presidential elections. Some sceptical observers believe Ecomog, which has pledged to stay in Liberia for at least six months after the elections, has cut lucrative deals with Mr Taylor for continued access to resources including timber, rubber and diamonds. The resources were systematically plundered by all sides in the civil war, including Ecomog.

The US has various geo-political interests in Liberia — including the world's largest rubber plantation and an Africa-wide communications network. The appearance of having achieved democracy in Liberia, no matter how illusory, may help compensate for débâcles such as the peacekeeping effort in Somalia.

Yet there are enough examples — Bosnia, Cambodia and Sierra Leone — of the potentially disastrous consequences of holding elections without addressing the causes of conflict, of engineering a hollow democracy without ensuring peace or justice.

UN accuses Unita rebels of stoking war

Mark Tran in New York

THE United Nations last week strongly condemned Unita, the former rebel movement in Angola, for failing to live up to its peace settlement, as fear mounts that the country will return to civil war.

In a statement more pointedly critical of Unita than any before, the Security Council expressed deep concern at the group's efforts to revive its fighting force.

Under the settlement, monitored by the UN, the former rebel army led by Jonas Savimbi was required over the past two years to lay down its arms and integrate its troops into the Angolan national army.

Some integration has occurred, but at a much slower pace than envisaged, and diplomats believe Unita is backtracking by regrouping its demobilised troops in rebel-controlled areas.

"There is a worry that Angola is about to go the same way as Cambodia," a diplomat said last week after the council was briefed on the situation in Angola by Bernard Miyet, the under-secretary general for peacekeeping. The $3 billion UN effort in Cambodia is thought to be seriously jeopardised by Hun Sen's coup.

Angola has one of the UN's biggest peacekeeping efforts. It has been active in the country since the 1992 elections, but particularly since the 1994 Lusaka peace accords, which eventually led to last April's swearing-in of a national unity government.

About 5,000 UN troops are in Angola in an operation that cost $1 million a day until a recent troop reduction.

"The process has been like drawing blood out of a stone," said a senior diplomat. "It's been a power play with a lot at stake, and Savimbi is a great player. He has always dragged his feet and will only respond if there is muscle behind our words."

The UN has tried to keep Mr Savimbi in line by imposing sanctions, including bans on fuel and arms, and it raised the prospect of freezing Unita's foreign bank accounts, and a trade ban against Unita-controlled areas.

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Elected mayor for London declared a capital idea

THE PLAN to give London an elected body and a mayor to run its affairs has proved to be one of the new government's more popular ideas. It has been hugely endorsed in opinion polls and probably played a big part in London's above-average swing to Labour at the general election. Even the Conservatives have endorsed it.

The proposals for a directly-elected executive mayor, and a small assembly of 24 to 32 members, were outlined in a consultative green paper this week. A white paper will follow later this year, leading to a referendum next year, legislation in 1999, and a single voice for London probably in 2000.

As other world capitals have found, a directly-elected mayor can be a strong symbol of civic identity, and a London mayor answerable to 7 million people will not lack influence. But his (or, less probably, her) real power will be limited by the fact that nine-tenths of a £3 billion budget will be provided and controlled by central government.

Nominally, at least, the mayor will control a variety of services — Tube trains, buses, roads, and the police and fire services — and there are suggestions that the mayor could raise extra funds through road pricing and parking charges. But he could have a troubled relationship with the hotch-potch of 32 boroughs which currently control most of the capital's services.

Some flamboyant names bandied about as candidates for the job include Steven Norris and David Mellor, former Tory ministers; Tony Banks, the current sports minister; and Lord Archer, pulp author and former Tory party chairman.

THE controversial Salisbury bypass was cancelled, for environmental reasons — and after a revolt by 18 Labour MPs — by the transport secretary, John Prescott, who also deferred plans for a widening of sections of the congested M25 motorway around London.

But the Birmingham northern relief road, to take the pressure off the M6 motorway, will be allowed to go ahead. The £300 million project will be the first motorway to be privately built and will be the first — apart from bridges — to charge tolls.

Meanwhile Leicester is to be the first British city to experiment with a "pay-to-drive" scheme. Volunteer commuters will have a choice of paying a stiff toll to drive along a 2.5-mile main route into the city or using cheap, fast buses if they leave their cars on the periphery.

A NOTTINGHAMSHIRE school was ordered to report to the school standards minister, Stephen Byers, on why it expelled a 15-year-old girl in the middle of her GCSE course because she refused to apologise for writing to a local paper about the quality of her teaching.

Sarah Briggs was excluded from Queen Elizabeth's School in Mansfield after writing about staff absenteeism and failure to address recommendations from the Office for Standards in Education, whose inspectors had found educational standards unacceptable. Three other pupils who had also signed the letter bowed to the head teacher's demands for a written apology. Sarah refused, insisting that her comments were true. Mr Byers said education was not "some secret world about which parents and pupils should not be allowed to comment".

LABOUR'S "old guard" complained bitterly about the decision by the Prime Minister to offer seats on a new Cabinet consultative committee to the Liberal Democrat leader, Paddy Ashdown, and his senior colleagues. Downing Street said the committee would not make policy but would consider "matters of mutual concern", of which the most obvious are the constitution and possible reform of the voting system.

But the veteran of the left, Tony Benn, complained that Mr Blair's cosying up to the Lib Dems, coupled with his other intended party reforms, was "the beginning of the end of the Labour party". He suspected a plot to create an entirely new party of the centre, similar to the US Democrats.

Roy Hattersley, a former Labour deputy leader, also announced himself a reluctant dissenter because the Blair government was "no longer a force for a more equal society".

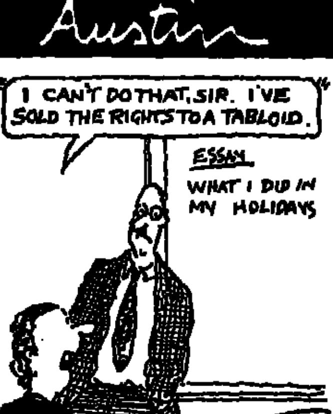
His reaction, however, was directed more against the decision to charge university students for tuition — a move, he felt, Labour leaders like Hardie, Attlee and Wilson could never have supported.

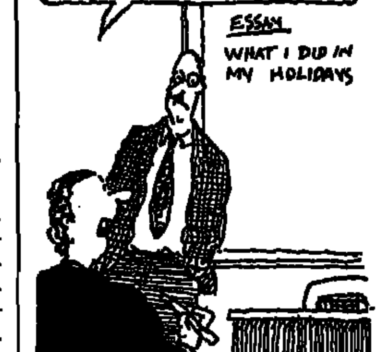
Mr Blair responded: "People like them were in charge of the party for almost 20 years while we were losing general elections. The Labour party of the early eighties has largely gone — and a good thing too."

SEAN KINSELLA, a 14-year-old schoolboy who ran away with his best friend's mother, returned to Britain after the pair were tracked down to an apartment in Florida.

Tracey Whalin, aged 33, who was said to have admitted to having a sexual affair with Sean for more than a year, is being held in prison in Key West charged with lewd and indecent assault on a child.

Sean, who has found tabloid stardom with the sale of his story to the Sun newspaper, said he was looking forward to a football trial which could lead to a place on the England youth team. "It was all I was thinking about in Florida," he said.





Walk in . . . Mike Grindley (centre) leads staff back into the GCHQ intelligence centre at Cheltenham at the end of a 13-year struggle against a union ban imposed by the Thatcher administration. Fourteen were sacked for refusing to give up union rights, which have been reinstated by Labour PHOTO

Jails given £43m boost

Alan Travis

AN EMERGENCY cash injection of £43 million for Britain's overcrowded jails was ordered last week after official warnings that there would be "severe risks to control" if more prisons were not built.

The Prison Service report, ordered by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, says so many jails are falling apart they risk condemnation by the health and safety authorities.

The audit report also says that Prison Service spending has not kept pace with inmate numbers, which have increased by 40 per cent in the past four years. The Prison Service faces a shortage of 2,950 places by spring 1999 — equal to six new jails. Four more jails, including two private ones, are in the pipeline.

The director-general of the Prison Service, Richard Tilt, said the extra £43 million cash would enable him to cope with the expected numbers of inmates this winter.

The Government is desperate to avoid the use of cells in police stations to hold prison inmates. The report says such a system is extremely expensive — £10,000 a month for each inmate — and the Prison Service has no funds to cover it.

Professor cleared of sex abuse warns of false claims

Stuart Millar

A WORLD-renowned philosophy professor was last week cleared of sexually assaulting two female students who invited themselves back to his study after they had met at a university garden party.

After a jury at Reading crown court had taken almost four hours to find him not guilty, John Cottingham, aged 54, warned that his ordeal proved how vulnerable lecturers could be to malicious harassment claims.

The two students — referred to as Miss X and Miss Y — had claimed that when they went back to his study, the professor had turned the conversation to whips, chains and the Marquis de Sade before stripping and molesting them.

But Prof Cottingham, an authority on Descartes who has taught at Reading university for 25 years, said the pair had attempted to "humiliate, seduce or entice" him. When that failed, they had concocted a "pack of lies" as part of a sexual power ploy to discredit him.

He said the older of the two students, now 24, had performed a striptease in front of him before kissing her friend, aged 22.

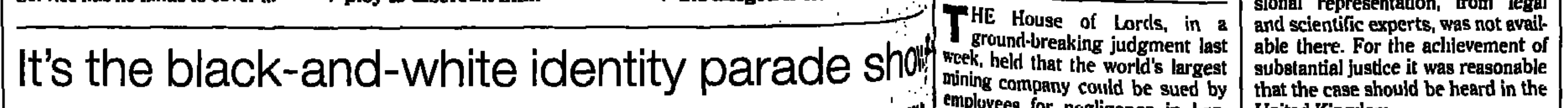
The professor's wife, Myra, and children, Joanna, aged 17, and Matthew, 20, broke down in tears when the verdict was returned. Prof Cottingham said: "This has obviously been a hideous year for myself and my family. I am very glad it has been an outcome in which I have been completely vindicated."

His case should serve as a lesson to other lecturers, he said.

Miss Y, the older student, told the jury the professor had got down on his knees and invited them to join him, then sexually assaulted them. She said they had been too shocked to run away.

But the court heard that Miss Y had made a similar allegation against a man she had met in the United States three years earlier. The case was dropped after she refused to take a lie-detector test.

Later, the mother of one of the students said they were considering taking out civil action over the alleged incident.



It's the black-and-white identity parade show

David Ward

POLICE in South Yorkshire said last week they would alter their procedures after eight white men were blacked up by a make-up artist for an identity parade involving a man describing himself as a Salford-born, half-Irish, half-West African Mancunian.

Martin Kamara faced a blackmail charge at Sheffield crown court but the judge abandoned the trial when he heard details of the parade, describing it as a farce.

But South Yorkshire's assistant chief constable, Tim Hollis, defended the officers who called in the artist, and said they would not be disciplined. "I don't expect to accuse anyone of a farce if they were trying genuinely to get it right," he said. "They tried; they were misguided."

Mr Hollis said officers had made strenuous efforts to make the identity parade work after he had not been able to find men whose skin colour matched that of Mr Kamara, a bald, bearded engineer who is 6ft 3in tall.

"They are guilty only of trying too hard to make the process work. No damage was done because the defence solicitor said he was not happy."

Mr Kamara aged 43, of Wheatley, who had denied demanding £[illegible] from a businessman, said: "It was like an audition for the Al Jolson show. As the white men stood in the line-up, the heat and the bright lights made their make-up run and smudge. There was no way the identity parade could have been fair — I stood out like a sore thumb."

Michael Pearson, for the prosecution, said that the parade had eventually been abandoned without witnesses being called to view the suspects.

But Peter Moon, director of Sheffield's Racial Equality Council, said the South Yorkshire police were "wide open to ridicule".

Alarm at death-in-custody errors

Clare Dyer

THE Crown Prosecution Service was last week accused of being a shambles after it admitted twice in two days that a decision not to prosecute police officers over a death in custody was flawed.

This week the Director of Public Prosecutions, Dame Barbara Mills, lost the right to the final say on whether police or prison staff should be prosecuted over deaths in custody, pending the outcome of an independent inquiry into her handling of such cases.

Dame Barbara agreed to reconsider a decision not to prosecute over the death of Richard O'Brien, an Irish-born father of seven, after a High Court challenge was brought by his widow, Alison.

She then threw in her hand on a similar challenge brought by Olamid Jones, widow of Shiji Lapite, a Nigerian asylum-seeker who died after being placed in a neck-hold 30 minutes after he was stopped by police for "acting suspiciously." Inquest juries had recorded verdicts of unlawful killing in both instances.

The cases reveal that, despite the highly charged and controversial nature of such cases, decisions are taken at a lower level and evidence is not considered by the DPP.

The case collapsed after Patrick O'Connor, QC for the O'Brien family, alerted judges to discrepancies in an affidavit from Robert Munday, the principal crown prosecutor who takes prosecution decisions in police cases, and memos to superiors about the case, explaining why the decision was taken.

Mr Munday cites considerations in a memo — for example his theory that injuries to Mr O'Brien were inflicted by his son accidentally kicking him in the police van, contrary to the pathologist's evidence that these were probably caused by his head being banged on the ground — which are absent from the affidavit submitted to the court under oath explaining the reasons for not instigating a prosecution.

Lord Justice Rose expressed concern about the different reasons given by Mr Munday for not going ahead with a prosecution in his affidavit and the memo. The judge also said he was concerned about the confusion over who had taken the decision.

A Crown Prosecution Service spokeswoman said Dame Barbara did not see the evidence but only a summary briefing note.

Police chief calls for action

Duncan Campbell

BRITAIN'S most senior police officer is seeking the power to sack corrupt officers on the spot. Sir Paul Condon, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, believes there are up to 200 dishonest officers in the force who are using the disciplinary process to evade punishment.

Sir Paul believes that the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, should confer powers to take effective action.

The Commissioner would like to be able to dismiss dishonest officers who no longer enjoy the confidence of their colleagues. To reassure officers who fear they would be the targets of concerted malicious allegations by criminals, a new law would be sought to make such allegations against the police a criminal offence.

At present, a police officer can be dismissed only after lengthy disciplinary proceedings. Sir Paul believes this has been abused, with some officers taking sick leave — sometimes with their doctors saying that if the officer concerned had to face a disciplinary hearing, he might commit suicide. He also feels concern about the way officers under investigation make use of the right to silence on legal advice.

Sir Paul makes it clear he believes corruption affects as few as 200 officers out of 27,000 in the Met and that the standard of honesty and commitment is high.

Life as we don't know it . . . The evolved Octopod which has learned to move itself PHOTO ROGER BAMBER

Artificial life crawls on to Brighton beach

IT IS a fascination that has existed since long before Victor Frankenstein realised his dream of infusing life into an inanimate body, only to find "the beauty of the dream vanished and breathless horror in my heart", *writes Stuart Millar*.

But hundreds of scientists, philosophers and artists converged on Brighton this week for an event that proves the determination to create life has not diminished since Frankenstein's monster first opened its eyes.

Almost 180 years since Mary Shelley wrote Frankenstein, the fourth European Conference on Artificial Life underlines how far this burgeoning area of research has advanced beyond the imaginations of science fiction writers.

On show are some of the most advanced artificial creatures on the planet, some of which walk, talk and learn, while others exist only in supercomputers but can breed and develop strategies for their survival.

Among the most striking exhibits is the Evolved Octopod, a large purple creature resembling a Meccano spider. The octopod's "brain" was created as a software package that allowed it to learn to move itself. Each time it learned something new it was given a "virtual reward" until the software became so successful that it was transferred into an actual machine. Even now, the octopod continues to learn new ways of moving — for reasons its creators do not understand.

The event includes debates on the way people understand the origins of life and discussions on the ethics of artificial life.

Injuries fall under UK law

Paul Brown and Greg Dropkin

THE House of Lords, in a ground-breaking judgment last week, held that the world's largest mining company could be sued by employees for negligence in London, for injuries received thousands of miles away.

The decision opens the door for other multinationals with headquarters in London to be sued for actions of their overseas subsidiaries.

The case involved Scottish engineer Edward Connelly, who developed throat cancer after working in the Rossing uranium mine in Namibia, owned by RTZ. He was exposed to high levels of radioactive uranium and silica dust and had his larynx removed in 1986. He is seeking £400,000 damages.

The Law Lords held that the case could not be properly held in Namibia because the highly professional representation, from legal and scientific experts, was not available there. For the achievement of substantial justice it was reasonable that the case should be heard in the United Kingdom.

Another fundamental issue was one of legal aid, which was not available in Namibia. The Lords heard that Mr Connelly's legal team were prepared to work on the case for a fee conditional on a successful outcome to the case.

Richard Meeran, of Leigh Day & Co said: "This is a clear case of an English parent company trying to avoid its responsibilities for a dangerous process carried out abroad. Mr Connelly has been battling for three years to get his case heard here. Now we can at last get on with obtaining some compensation for his serious injuries.

Free tuition for students ends

John Carvel

A REVOLUTION in the funding of higher education was declared last week when the Government announced plans to charge undergraduates for tuition and scrap the student maintenance grant in a package of reforms to raise about £1.7 billion to expand universities and colleges.

The Education and Employment Secretary, David Blunkett, announced a new system of student loans to soften the blow. He said students and their parents would not be required to pay any extra money up front during courses, and that repayments after graduation would be tailored to avoid undue strain on income — if necessary by extending them over 23 years.

Undergraduates from families earning less than £16,000 a year would be exempt from the tuition fee, and there would be bursaries for students of teacher training, medicine and other social care courses.

They intend to phase in the changes from October next year, and the full effect will be felt by freshers arriving in 1999.

Mr Blunkett's announcement came within two hours of a report by the committee of inquiry under Sir Ron Dearing which proposed an annual tuition fee of £1,000 for all full-time undergraduates, but argued for the continuation of maintenance grants.

The Government largely accepts his report. But his plan for student funding flew in the face of Labour's manifesto commitment to abolish the grant. His tuition fees would have covered little more than half the cost of the £2 billion reforms.

In Brief

BRITISH calls for new sanitary standards over the killing of beef cows in Continental abbatoirs for export to Britain were narrowly backed by European Union farm ministers, ending the threat of a UK import ban.

JUDGES trying two British nurses charged with murdering Yvonne Gilford in Saudi Arabia are considering disqualifying the victim's brother from having a say in their punishment, as he is not an heir and so could have no legal right to demand that the nurses, Deborah Parry and Lucille McLauchlan, be executed if found guilty.

ABORTIONS rose by more than 8 per cent last year compared with the previous year. The increase was probably a result of the October 1995 contraceptive pill scare.

Living in terror, page 24

THE Government is to carry out a review of the role of women in the armed forces, giving them more prominence and operating a "zero tolerance" policy towards sexual and racial harassment in the services.

RONNIE BIGGS, the Great Train Robber, aged 68, who lives in exile in Brazil, may be extradited to Britain following the ratification of a new treaty between the two countries.

TRACIE ANDREWS, aged 28, has been jailed for life after being found guilty of murdering her fiancé, Lee Harvey, despite her claim that he was the victim of a road rage attack.

ROSEMARY WEST will spend the rest of her life in prison, the Home Office announced. She was convicted in 1995 of killing 10 young women.

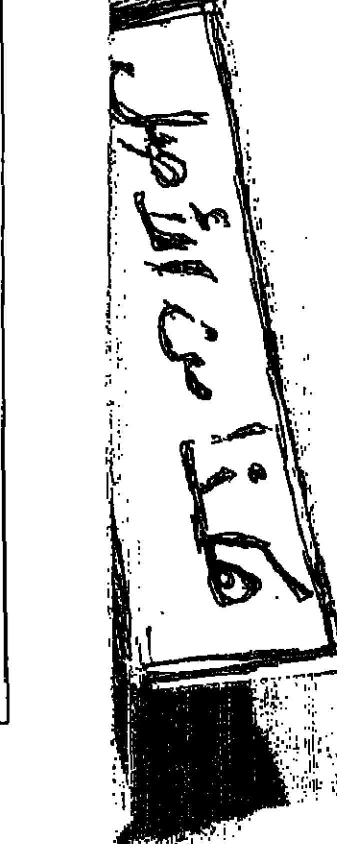
BRITAIN'S new ambassador to the United States is to be Christopher Meyer, a professional diplomat and former spokesman for John Major.

RAYMOND "Jak" Jackson, cartoonist on the London Evening Standard for 31 years, has died, aged 70.

GRAHAM FITCHIE, a part-time youth worker, has been jailed for three years after he accrued and passed on the biggest collection of paedophile material downloaded from the Internet to be discovered in Britain.

PAVLOS Georgiou, a Cypriot fisherman, has been convicted of knowingly and negligently transmitting the Aids virus to a British woman, Janette Pink.

VINCENT HANNA, the broadcaster and political pundit described by colleagues as one of the best journalists of his generation, has died, aged 57.



Labour hails great Scottish adventure

Ewen MacAskill

THE Labour government last week embarked on its biggest venture yet when it published a constitutional package aimed at returning to Scotland in three years the parliament it lost almost 300 years ago.

Describing it as "a new parliament for the new millennium", the Scottish Secretary, Donald Dewar, published a white paper that will create a powerful 129-member tax-raising and legislative parliament in Edinburgh in January 2000.

The white paper could cause the biggest constitutional upheaval in Britain since Irish independence in 1920, with opportunities for a rethink of the political structure in England too.

The scale of the task being undertaken in disentangling the two countries is underlined in the detail. Issues from abortion to film classification will be divided between Westminster and Edinburgh.

The paper will establish a parliament with much more power than the one proposed by Labour in the 1970s. It will be responsible for health, education, local government, economic development, law and home affairs, and other departments. Westminster will retain responsibility for foreign policy, defence, security and other key areas. A complex mechanism will adjudicate between Westminster and the Scottish parliament.

The new parliament will be elected by a form of proportional representation, with 73 of the 129 MSPs (Members of a Scottish Parliament) elected from constituencies and the remainder from a list system. It will be a fixed-term parliament. The numbers to be elected may be reduced eventually from 129 to 108, in line with the likely reduction in representation of the 72 Scottish MPs at Westminster.

Conservative MPs complained that ministers from the Scottish parliament will be able to negotiate direct with the European Union, at times on behalf of the UK, but they would not be able to question them.

There was also concern among Conservative MPs over the Scottish parliament's power to raise up to £450 million either through income tax or some other form of taxation.

The Scottish National Party finally ended its long-standing hostility to devolution last weekend and confirmed it would support the campaign for a Yes vote in September's referendum.

The party's leader, Alex Salmond, said the Government's white paper on devolution opened a "door of opportunity" for the Scottish people to move towards outright independence and said the SNP would mount its own pro-devolution campaign, as well as supporting the trade union-backed Scotland Forward group.

The decision came as William Hague announced that a future Tory government would not abolish a Scottish parliament or Welsh assembly.

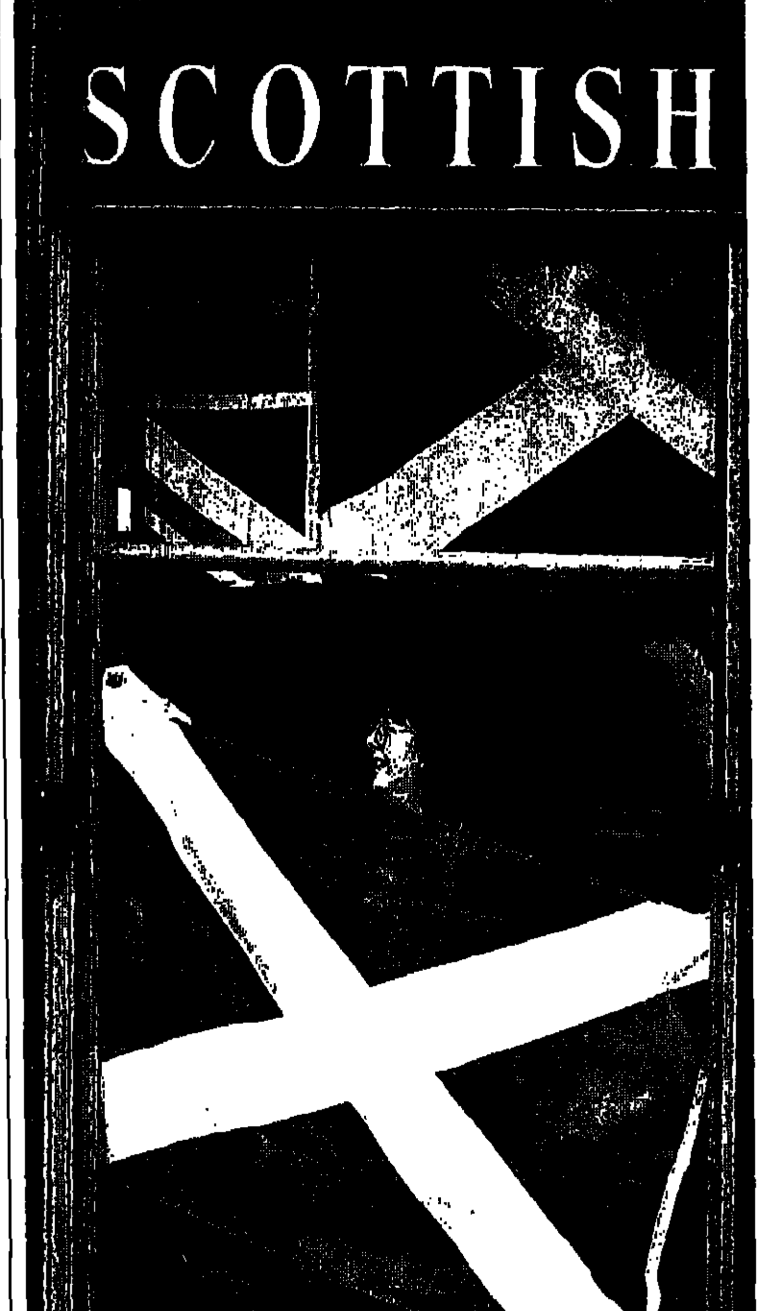
The air of self-confidence and public unanimity from Labour in Scotland contrasted with the Welsh Labour party, some of whose MPs openly defied proposals for a Welsh assembly.

In a Commons debate on the assembly, the strongest attack came from Alan Williams, the Labour MP for Swansea West. He mocked the Welsh Secretary's pledge to involve MPs from across the UK in the campaign to secure a Yes vote, saying: "Once again, you are bringing the English to Wales to tell we Welsh what's good for us."

But Plaid Cymru boosted plans for a Welsh assembly last weekend by calling for a Yes vote.

Meanwhile the first opinion poll since the devolution white paper shows that support for a Scottish parliament has dipped. An ICM poll in Scotland on Sunday newspaper shows 68 per cent say they will vote for the parliament, a fall of 4 per cent in the last month. And opposition to the "tartan tax" is at its highest ever with 36 per cent against the proposal to give the parliament power to vary the basic rate of income tax by 3p, compared with 55 per cent who back the tax-raising powers.

Comment, page 12



Flying the flag . . . A shop assistant hoists the cross of St Andrew in the window of Edinburgh's Royal Mile PHOTOGRAPH: JEFF MITCHELL

Blair shrugs off defection

Rebecca Smithers and Ewen MacAskill

TONY Blair last week brushed aside questions over the embarrassing defection to the Tories of a Labour activist when he toured Uxbridge, the first prime minister to campaign in a byelection for more than 18 years.

Labour dismissed the announcement by Michael Shrimpton, a lawyer, that he was joining the Conservatives as a case of sour grapes after he failed to be selected as the candidate in next week's byelection.

The party added that Mr Shrimpton, far from being a stalwart Labour member, had been in the Tory party, as well as the Social Democratic party and the Socialist Workers' party. A spokesman said: "Michael Shrimpton changes political party almost as often as he changes his clothes."

Mr Shrimpton's main complaint of Labour's "over-centralisation" follows local party concern at the imposition of a headquarters-approved candidate in place of a local man, David Williams, who came within a few hundred votes of ending 25 years of Conservative representation in the Middlesex seat on May 1. Mr Blair's visit was an attempt to consolidate the 12 per cent swing to Labour at the general election.

The seat was held since 1972 by Sir Michael Shersby, who died a week after the election. Holding the seat would boost the morale of Conservative leader, William Hague, as the Tories have not won a byelection since his win at Richmond, Yorkshire in 1989.

● Gordon McMaster, the Labour MP for Paisley South, has died at the age of 37. He had complained for two years about depression and exhaustion linked to over-exposure to organophosphates from years as a professional gardener.

Mr McMaster held the safe Labour seat with a majority of 12,750 votes at the election. Mr Blair said he was "deeply saddened" to hear of his death, believed to be suicide.

Unionists to share table with Sinn Fein

Mary Holland in Dublin

ULSTER Unionists will sit down to talk with Sinn Fein almost as soon as the peace process resumes after the summer break, leading loyalist sources believe. The breakthrough is expected on September 9, six days before the date set by the Government for the start of substantive talks, when former US Senator George Mitchell will chair a plenary session at Stormont.

The Ulster Unionist party has already decided in principle to take part. Sinn Fein representatives are now expected to be asked to attend to sign up to the Mitchell principles, paving the way for the party's admission to the negotiations, which are due to begin on September 15.

This opens the possibility that leaders of the main unionist party will sit in the same room as Sinn Fein representatives for the first time in the history of Northern Ireland's troubles.

Publicly, the Ulster Unionists are arguing for bilateral talks between ministers and political parties, avoiding direct contact with Sinn Fein. But their desire to see Sinn Fein sign up may induce them to take the momentous step of meeting.

The principles commit all parties to the use of non-violent and democratic means to pursue their objectives. Sinn Fein will also have to agree to abide by any political settlement reached at the talks.

For the unionists, this would mean that the republican movement would have accepted the principle of consent — that any future settlement must have the agreement of a majority within the province.

David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist leader, and his deputy, John Taylor, have emphasised that the party will remain engaged in the talks process. One unionist source said: "A great deal will depend on what happens in the next six weeks. Obviously, it is crucial that there should be no IRA violence. It would help if we could be seen to have made some progress on the decommissioning front."

The Ulster Unionists are to undertake a series of intensive consultations with party members and other political groups over the next few weeks.

Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionists and Robert McCartney's UK Unionists walked out of the peace process last week and said they would not return until another process was set up. Mr Trimble will argue that if the main party representing the unionist community follows their example, the unionist case will go by default and the task of devising political structures for Northern Ireland will be left to the nationalist SDLP and Sinn Fein.

They will also point out that if Sinn Fein signs up to the Mitchell principles, it means that the republicans will have to accept a "partitionist settlement". — *The Observer*

PM rejects call for privacy law

Michael White

TONY BLAIR remains opposed to privacy legislation despite his Lord Chancellor's warning last weekend that the Government's commitment to incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into British law is likely to prompt judges to create a privacy act.

Because the ECHR contains a right to privacy, as English common law does not, Lord Irvine believes a series of early landmark cases will allow judges to develop a de facto privacy act — possibly more restrictive than Parliament itself might impose.

After a succession of attacks on Tory MPs, from sex scandals to cash-for-questions, John Major lived in fear that backbenchers on both sides would ignore ministerial warnings and vote for a draconian — and unworkable — revenge on the press.

Lord Irvine fired a different warning shot: "All I am saying is that law of privacy is likely to develop and if it develops as a tort of privacy for damages, then you can imagine heavy actions and court cases. ... why would the closest analogy be libel?"

Lord Irvine, one of the Prime Minister's closest ministerial allies, used an interview with the Observer newspaper to urge the media and the wider public to give "serious thought" to whether or not the problem would be be tackled by Parliament passing a specific bill.

Though the Lord Chancellor is also said to be against privacy legislation — technically difficult and open to savage "public interest" attack by the media groups Mr Blair has sought to woo — his interview implies that ministers may be forced to act.

Mr Blair favours self-regulation and has promised a Freedom of Information Act.

Hague sets out to reform Tory party

Michael White

TORY leader William Hague last week unveiled the Conservatives' most spectacular organisational U-turn since 1945 when he announced centralisation of party structure, powers to expel rogue MPs like Neil Hamilton and a ban on the foreign donations that have disfigured Tory fundraising.

In the first convincing evidence that the Opposition leader acknowledges the size of the task he inherited, Mr Hague effectively borrowed Tony Blair's New Labour modernisation blueprint and adapted it to Tory needs.

The admission that millions of pounds of foreign donations accepted under Margaret Thatcher and John Major have proved a political disaster came after years of blank refusal to admit anything was wrong. Not only will the names of large donors, private and corporate, be published in future, but MPs, councillors and activists whose "gross misconduct brings scorn upon the party" will be expelled.

That, too, was heresy until election day, as a frustrated Mr Major found himself unable to prevent Mr Hamilton hanging on in Tatton until the voters picked Martin Bell.

Hague aides denied planning to centralise candidate selection, as Labour is doing. But the rush to slaughter sacred cows includes the possibility that all shortlists will include a woman.

In a major act of contrition Mr Hague said: "The simple fact is that the voters believed we were divided among ourselves. They believed we had lost touch with some of the people we always said we represented. They formed the view that there was more than a hint of arrogance and conceit in the ranks of our parliamentary party."

The tone of his speech, and its appeal for intellectual rigour as well as new structures, reminded some Tories of the work, led by R A Butler at the Conservative Research Department, to restore party fortunes after Labour's last great landslide in 1945. The Tories regained power for 13 years in 1951.

Even moderates will take heart that he is concentrating on organisation during Labour's honeymoon rather than setting out policy positions, as he initially did in ruling out the European single currency for 10 years.

But Labour mocked his efforts. Peter Mandelson, minister without portfolio, predicted that "no effort to create a pale imitation of New Labour will count if there is no policy change to go with it".

Though Mr Hague went out of his way in the speech to senior party activists and officials to assure the grassroots that he would not "ride roughshod over our constituency associations," its thrust was entirely towards creating a central machine through which the leadership can talk directly to the rank and file.

He admitted that the party must be more open about its funds, the subject of recurring battles with Labour and the media. "In not being so in the past, we have often appeared secretive and defensive, and we have paid a political price for that," Mr Hague said.

The 36-year-old Tory leader said that the election defeat had been a "disaster" on a scale only now sinking in. In effect he owned up to many of Labour's campaign charges that ministers had become arrogant and out of touch after 18 years in power.

Britain to cede Atlantic rights

Lawrence Donegan and John Vidal

THE Government is to sign away Britain's rights to 60,000 square miles of the Atlantic ocean around the granite outcrop of Rockall in a move which could potentially cost billions in future oil, fishing and minerals rights.

The Foreign Office confirmed last week that the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, will ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, an international treaty that forbids uninhabited rocks without an economy being used as a basis for territorial claims.

Britain's westernmost claims will now be the islands of St Kilda, 100 miles off the Western Isle of Harris. Rockall itself remains part of the UK because it is within 200 miles of St Kilda.

As a result of the decision, Britain will have to cede fishing and mining rights to an area in a 200-mile radius around Rockall. Much of the sea around the rock will be redefined as "international waters". The announcement may reopen diplomatic disputes between Britain, Ireland and Iceland, which have laid claim to the 83ft high outcrop annexed by Britain in 1955.

Bob Allen, chief executive of the Scottish Fishermen's Association, accused the Government of squandering a potentially valuable area of sea. "We can't support giving up an area that size. Our boats now face international competition if they want to develop a fishery for unexploited deep water species."

The National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations also condemned the decision. But a spokesman for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said it would "barely affect" British catches, with no more than 0.2 per cent of the fish landed in Scotland each year coming from the area. "It will not affect British fishing quotas, and 95 per cent of the affected area will be open to British fleets."

Although oil and gas exploration rights are based on the extent of the continental shelf rather than the Law of the Sea, it is expected that Britain may now have to cede the seabed west of Rockall.

The news was welcomed by Greenpeace, which has occupied Rockall for two months in protest at the industrialisation of the Atlantic.

Mr Cook said that by signing the convention Britain would gain trade advantages and greater leverage in tackling environmental problems.

Opening the secret Swiss vaults

THE SWISS Bankers' Association is billing its new drive to locate Holocaust survivors or their heirs as the final chapter that will settle accounts "with dignity and honour". It is rather late for either. For decades their system relied on a code of secrecy to avoid opening the books. Last week, spurred by a mixture of international pressure and domestic unease, the Association placed advertisements in newspapers throughout the world listing the names of all dormant accounts dating back to the second world war. Even so, this measure will only be effective if the fullest details are provided to assist identification. In the past the Swiss have refused to divulge any significant information, only admitting that they held a few million dollars in Jewish assets. Some accounts were closed without the knowledge of potential account holders and advertised locally before the money was pocketed by the banks or handed on to Swiss charities. A 1960s law on disclosure expired in 1974 and only one in seven of all claimants was successful. The very existence of the list shows how far the banks dodged the disclosure of dormant assets then.

Yet it would be a mistake to regard this (and perhaps gain satisfaction from it) as a tale of peculiarly Swiss hypocrisy. Consciences have been stirred in Switzerland as well as a sense of commercial prudence. It should also be acknowledged that banking and bureaucracy are much the same everywhere. A special session in the Israeli Knesset last week was a reminder that Britain, on a smaller but still significant scale, has a similar problem. Millions of pounds in British bank accounts — many of which belonged to Jews — were confiscated by the Custodian of Enemy Property because they were owned by "enemy nationals" in Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary. As in Switzerland, efforts by survivors or their heirs to get back their assets have often been frustrated. Research is now under way to establish the status of these funds: some may have been handed over in post-war deals with other countries, and *ex gratia* payments to individuals may need to be made.

Looming over these developments is the even larger issue — only fully exposed a year ago — of the Nazi gold left in Swiss bank vaults after the war. The Western allies took half the amount and disposed of most of it in bilateral deals: a final tranche of about $96 million remains in the Bank of England and the US Federal Reserve. The other half (about $1 billion at today's prices) presumably still sits in the Swiss vaults. The Bergier Commission is expected to report on its history and whereabouts by the end of the year. Then Switzerland is likely to face a set of new claims — both from governments and from survivors since a portion of the gold was "non-monetary", or melted down loot. Overdue is hardly the word for an exercise that is 50 years too late. But it needs to be done, with energy, for those who still survive.

Scotland's vote for self-rule

FOR MORE than 100 years, Scots have been battling for some form of self-government. At first it was only a slightly eccentric band of Scots, grouped round the Scottish Home Rule Association, founded in 1886, but support gradually increased. Thirteen bills were introduced before the first world war. The Irish left but the Scots never quite made it. More bills for Scotland were introduced in the inter-war years and again after the second world war. The attempts were repeatedly frustrated, partly because of the duplicity of the Westminster establishment but mainly because of divisions among the Scots themselves. Last week's white paper marks the best chance yet for the Scots to complete what the former Opposition leader John Smith described as Labour's "unfinished business".

The Scots appear to have reached a settled will, with little opposition any longer to devolution. The messy débâcle of the 1979 referendum is unlikely to be repeated. That referendum took place at the fag-end of a Labour government, with Labour MPs openly divided.

The Scottish Secretary, Donald Dewar, has done well for the Scots. His white paper delivers almost everything agreed by the Scottish people in a remarkable exercise in democracy, the Scottish Constitutional Convention, which brought together Labour, the Liberal Democrats, the churches, the unions, councils and others. Their blueprint is almost identical to the white paper: a 129-member parliament, elected by proportional representation, with tax-raising and law-making powers.

The price exacted by the Unionists in the Cabinet grouped around the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, was a reduction in the number of Scottish MPs at Westminster. Few will argue against this: what would be dishonest would be to claim this is an answer to the West Lothian Question (the argument that Scottish MPs at Westminster should have no say in English matters as English MPs have no say in Scottish matters). It is not the numbers that are in contention but the principle. Labour has argued in the past that this is an anomaly and that we will just have to live with it: after all, we put up with the Lords for long enough. The only real answer rests with the Liberal Democrats — a federal Britain — and the UK may yet evolve towards such a structure.

A more important question is whether creation of a Scottish parliament will maintain the Union — just as Catalonia has remained part of Spain and Bavaria part of Germany — or whether it will lead to full independence. It is a 50-50 shout. Under the security of the European Union umbrella, independence is a feasible option. Labour's response is a grown-up one: if the Scots eventually opt for independence, then so be it. But Labour will do its damnedest to avoid that by trying to make devolution work.

Devolution is not simply a matter for the Scots. Dismantling the structures at Westminster opens the way for getting rid of lots of staid practices and moving Britain towards a genuinely decentralised state. It will be a remarkable achievement for Labour, given that it won the election as a highly disciplined and centralised force.

The Guardian's late and much loved columnist, James Cameron, a Scot, writing about the Scottish devolution debate in the 1970s said the problem with the Scots was they liked argument for its own sake: "The Scotch have forever taken enormous pains never to be on the winning side." That has been true of the debate on self-government until now. The Scots have the opportunity in their referendum on September 11 finally to emerge on the winning side. We hope, for the sake of democracy throughout the UK, that they vote overwhelmingly Yes.

Arms for obfuscation

BRITAIN IS one of the largest arms exporters in the world, says the British Foreign Secretary. The Government deeply regrets this, and is determined to reduce the country's dependence upon the marketing of weapons of death.

Whoops! Cancel that second sentence! What Robin Cook actually said on Monday was that Britain's leading position in the business "obliges us to take seriously the reputation of the arms trade", because "success and responsibility go hand in hand". Yes, indeed they do. So do principle and expediency, as when Mr Cook proclaims an ethical policy but commits himself to maintain a strong defence industry.

His criteria for considering arms export licence applications start off well enough. A licence "should be refused" — no hesitation there — if it is inconsistent with Britain's international obligations. But the next criteria, on British national interests, tilt the other way. Such interests should be given "full weight", especially when they may affect British security or economic interests or "the UK's relations with the recipient country". A third set of criteria on human rights continues promisingly but soon bogs down. The Government will "take [human rights] into account" — no mention here of giving them "full weight". Export licences will be denied where there is *clear* evidence of the *recent* use of weapons for internal repression, or where the equipment has *obvious* application for that purpose. The adjectives give the benefit of any doubt to the end-user.

Mr Cook's statement lists so many criteria that the anti-arms campaigners will find something useful in it too. And his promised annual report will provide a new opportunity for checking progress. But the same old circle is being squared: no one, to be fair, expected New Labour to break it.

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Busybodies can do more harm than good

Martin Woollacott

WHEN a horrified George Kennan put on the television and watched "Marines going ashore in the grey dawn of another African day, in Somalia" five years ago he decided to keep his views to himself. America was already engaged and nothing the famous diplomat and scholar could say would change that, but he recorded in his diary that "I regard this move as a dreadful error".

It was not only that intervention without a serious consideration of the likely consequences was foolish, as Kennan saw it. Intervention, in Somalia and other places, was predicated on a vastly exaggerated idea of what a nation, even a very powerful one, could do for other societies, especially damaged and anarchic ones.

Since Somalia, there has been a continuing debate between those who think that intervention is usually wrong and often leads to disaster and those who think it an obligation on the better off and more stable countries. The coup in Cambodia, which has hustled out of power the party that won the United Nations-supervised elections, certainly reinforces the case of the pessimists. After all this effort, it seems, what has been accomplished is that a wing of the Cambodian communist party, those Khmer Rouge who joined forces with the Vietnamese, has been ensconced in power. Since Hun Sen's is the only halfway effective government available, and since a repetition of the unprecedented intervention of five years ago is inconceivable, he will prevail, and the world will probably choose to deal with him more or less unconditionally.

Nor is Cambodia the only disappointment, in looking at those interventions in the last few years which set out to restore, or create, the beginnings of normal life and democracy in countries broken down by war. Bosnia is, for the time being, a sort of success, but the possibility of a future failure is apparent. Albania, the scene of the most recent intervention, is an enigma. In West Africa, where regional intervention forces moved into Liberia and Sierra Leone, the picture is discouraging.

Kennan's analysis in Somalia was that change could be effected only by "the establishment of a governing power for the entire territory, and a very ruthless and determined one at that. It could not be a democratic one, because the very prerequisites for a democratic political system do not exist among the people in question. Our action holds no promise of correcting this situation".

There undoubtedly exists a formula for dealing with failed states which has been shown to be inadequate. Largely, but not entirely, an American formula, it consists of a triple application, over a very short period, of troops, elections, and money. The troops are to restore order, the elections to express the will of the people and give a new government legitimacy, and the money to revive the economy and to induce former opponents to deal with one another.

The trouble is that these elements, as applied in practice, represent more a kind of caricature of Western beliefs — in the usefulness of technically sophisticated military force, in democracy as a panacea, and in the power of cash — than an effective programme. What usually happens is that the troops do not stay long enough, the elections are held too early, and the money is stolen. A further element in the formula does not necessarily improve matters. The engagement of diverse non-governmental organisations brings benefits but can also compound the chaos and add to the pressure for quick results.

Process takes over. The predilection for phases, deadlines, and quantifiable results puts pressure on the career diplomats, soldiers, UN officials, and retired politicians who take on these thankless tasks to declare each stage of the process a success. Otherwise how could it continue? And how could United States commitments, in particular to pull out by a certain date, then be honoured? That is why progress is always uneven, but never so uneven as to bring about a halt, and why elections are always flawed but never so flawed as to be declared invalid. That is why it was never a possibility that the main elections in Bosnia would be postponed. Bosnians who cared about their country argued that quick elections would only consolidate the ethnic chauvinists. But they were drowned out by the election mantra. In Cambodia the cheating came afterwards, when the defeated party was invited into government simply because it threatened to make trouble if it was not given a share in power.

THE INCLINATION may be to blame the society concerned. The ambassador who many years ago in Cambodia paused to say "How can I explain the nothingness of these people?" was expressing an impatience that many have felt over the Khmer combination of insouciance and ruthlessness. But none of these stories is over. The impact of intervention on Cambodia, Bosnia, or Somalia cannot be fully measured. Even in Somalia, some good may have been achieved. We may wish these things had been done better, yet not conclude that they ought not to have been done at all.

Strobe Talbott, No 2 at the US state department, in a 1994 letter spoke of the resolve to establish "new attitudes, arrangements, and structures. Some of these then become fixtures on the international landscape; others evolve; others wither away; still others blow up in our faces". It is true that more is blowing up in our faces than we expected. In another book, Kennan quotes Macaulay's argument in the Commons that "by exerting ourselves to promote the happiness of the society with which we are most nearly connected and with which we are best acquainted, we shall do more to promote the happiness of mankind than by busying ourselves about matters which we do not understand and cannot control".

Kennan's is a necessary voice of caution. But it should be heeded not by avoiding every intervention, but by ensuring that intervention is not deformed into a theatrical display in which troops, election monitors, and aid givers rush about on stage while the forces that created the crisis in the first place remain menacingly in the wings.



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Silence speaks loud in Basque Country

Marie-Claude Decamps in Mondragon

IT IS raining in Mondragon, in the heart of Spain's Basque Country. But in this historic bastion of ETA, the armed Basque separatist movement whose political wing, Herri Batasuna (HB), controls the town council, the rain is not going to drench any blue-and-black ribbons of the kind that have decked buildings throughout Spain as a token of sympathy for the latest murdered hostage, Miguel Angel Blanco; shot by ETA on July 12. Here, there are no ribbons.

Nor will the downpour in the medieval streets of Mondragon's old town discourage local inhabitants from talking to journalists — they do not talk anyway.

And yet, despite the stony faces and a vague atmosphere of fear, a revolution is stirring. On July 18, the "moderate" nationalist Basque parties — the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), Eusko Alkartasuna and the Socialist Party — tabled a censure motion against the HB mayor of Mondragon, Xabier Zubizarreta.

They did so in line with the directives to "isolate HB politically" issued by most of the democratic parties, which were outraged by the murder of Blanco, a town councillor in Ermua. Against all expectations, Mondragon the silent is about to become a testing-ground for the new response to terrorism.

Mondragon has, in fact, always been something of a testing-ground. In the forties it offered a fine example of solidarity, when an inspired priest, José Maria de Arizmendiarrieta, formed the largest holding company of its kind in Spain, Mondragon Corporacion Co-operativa, consisting of 100 co-operatives. It now employs almost 80 per cent of the town's 25,000 inhabitants.

During the repressive years under General Francisco Franco, Mondragon was above all a testing-ground for the nationalist struggle. More than a score of ETA's leading fighters were born there.

The most celebrated of them was Txomin Iturbe, a charismatic leader who initiated negotiations with representatives of the Spanish government in Algiers at the end of the eighties. His funeral in Mondragon was an historic event: it was attended by 50,000 people waving nationalist flags and singing a hymn to Basque freedom.

In the past few years, however, Mondragon has become little more than a testing-ground for those who trade in fear and cruelty. It was here, in a tiny dungeon, that a prison warder, José Ortega Lara, was held hostage for 532 days. On July 1 he was freed by the Guardia Civil. That did not stop HB marching in support of ETA prisoners.

Mondragon is a place where a lot of arm-twisting goes on behind the scenes: during the election of the mayor, even though the other parties ganged up against HB (which got about 26 per cent of the vote), a number of town councillors decided at the last moment not to vote as they had been instructed. As a result, HB kept control of the council.

There were also perhaps fears that the situation might degenerate into violence, as it did in the town of Hernani, where HB, the majority party on the council, is at war with the Socialist mayor.

Some inhabitants of Mondragon suggest jokingly that the current state of affairs guarantees their peace of mind. This is not a town where telephone boxes, buses and cash dispensers are vandalised. Young people on the fringes of radical movements go and let off steam elsewhere.

In Mondragon, when people talk to you, preferably not in their homes, they tell much the same story — about anonymous phone calls, shopkeepers whose windows are smashed, a local politician who is attacked in a car park, a journalist whose photograph is published to intimidate him.

Suppliers of reinforced doors and metal shutters are doing good business. The town's pluckier inhabitants go and demonstrate in San Sebastian or Vitoria, never at home.

In Mondragon, political parties generally use cafés as their headquarters, except for Spain's ruling conservative People's party (PP). Its sole town councillor, Antonio Palacios, who is from Vitoria (no local person dared stand), says: "The list of our members is secret. If we had a headquarters, it would make a perfect target. It wouldn't last a week."

Almost every local political decision is taken in a café called Herriko Taberna, HB's headquarters. The walls are lined with photographs of the dozen ETA prisoners born in Mondragon, and a donation box is prominently displayed for those who wish "to support their families".

The café's owner — and HB supporter — José Ignacio remembers the years of repression when he was told, as a Basque-speaking child: "Speak Christian, won't you!" And he recalls how the Francoist police chiefs were given a rough ride by "our fighters".

But he says nothing of the present. When I refer to the massive demonstrations of the past few days and Blanco's horrible death, he remains stonily indifferent. "It had no effect on me. Unless we have the right to self-determination, we're not living in a democracy. And any method to reach that end is valid."

It would seem, then, that nothing has changed. And yet the unthinkable happened on July 14 — 1,000 demonstrators took to the streets of Mondragon. They expressed anger, not hatred. No one here wants to isolate HB "socially", by boycotting its supporters' shops, for example, as happened in Ermua and elsewhere.

"What's all this talk of our being isolated? Here we're all Basques, cousins, friends. Whether we're violent or not, we have to live together. That's what Madrid doesn't understand," says Joséba, a café owner.

The local PNV leader, Agustin Urgarte, whose door is covered with angry slogans such as "PNV, murderers!", says more or less the same thing, though with more of a political slant: "We in the PNV feel that we already enjoy a large measure of autonomy, that there are other ways of achieving self-determination, and that our future is bound up with Europe's future. But the Basque Country can't be divided up into two distinct societies. They have been intolerant, so don't let's act in the same way."

Palacios, of the PP, who knew Blanco when they were both economics students at Bilbao University, says: "To ostracise HB would be to play into ETA's hands and add fuel to the flames. We must leave some bridges open so they can join us, but they must be narrow ones."

(July 23)

The funeral of Miguel Angel Blanco, who was kidnapped and shot by ETA, in Ermua last month PHOTO: DESMOND BOYLAN

France looks to change its role in Africa

COMMENT
Frédéric Fritscher

ALTHOUGH the news is not yet official, France is poised to reduce its military presence in Africa. It has already been confirmed that France's Bouar base, in the Central African Republic, will be closed down; and it is very likely that French forces will soon pull out altogether from Gabon, Chad or the Central African Republic. The plan is to scale down the number of French troops in Africa from more than 8,000 to about 5,000.

In a sense the decision — which was taken before Lionel Jospin became prime minister — marks the continuity of France's Africa policy. It will be up to the new defence minister, Alain Richard, to explain the plan to France's friends on the continent. That will be no easy task, given the very close ties that link Paris with those three countries.

France has steadfastly supported Chad in its war to staunch the expansionist appetites of Libya's Colonel Muammar Gadafy. Had it not been for the Epervier operation, which took thousands of French soldiers into Chad in the late eighties, the Aozou strip would now be Libyan.

President Jacques Chirac is an old friend of Gabon's president, Omar Bongo, and French oil companies have done very well out of Gabon's mineral wealth. As for the Central African Republic, it is no secret that it has long served as a key operational base for the French army in Africa.

It is common knowledge that Paris has "appointed" and then ousted a succession of Chadian presidents, unconditionally bolstered the Bongo regime, and organised the elections that brought President Ange-Félix Patassé to power in the Central African Republic.

Richard is going to have to come up with some convincing arguments. No one yet knows whether he will plead budgetary constraints, at a time when the French army is about to turn professional, or argue that all defence agreements between France and a large number of African countries need to be reviewed.

Times have changed since those countries gained independence, and *realpolitik* suggests that it would be in France's best interests to concentrate on the need for such a review.

Although it will not get unanimous approval from the African countries affected, this redefinition of military ties is a precondition if France is to carry conviction when it talks about a shift in its Africa policy — a move that has often been mooted in the past but has never so far been initiated.

(July 20-21)

French towns put children under curfew

Vincent Hubé

SINCE July 7, five French town councils have imposed a midnight to 6am curfew on children under 12. Several members of the government have criticised the measures. The schools minister, Ségolène Royal (Socialist), and the youth and sports minister, Marie-George Buffet (Communist), expressed their hostility to the idea in the July 20 issue of Le Journal du Dimanche.

"Children aren't dogs," said Royal. "Certain mayors are trying to earn themselves some cheap publicity as security hardliners, but responsibility for children of that age lies with their parents. Rather than issue banning orders, [such mayors] would do better to ask themselves why certain children are on their own in the streets at night, so they can be helped and their family problems solved."

Buffet said: "One shouldn't respond to a social problem by issuing orders that aim to make already destabilised families feel even more guilty."

The first to react to the mayors' decisions was the interior minister, Jean-Pierre Chevènement. He denounced "hasty measures which are perhaps not perfectly suitable".

Dreux, near Paris, was the first council to impose a curfew on children. Sorgues, in Provence, Aulnay-sous-Bois, on the outskirts of Paris, and the towns of Gien and Sully in the Loire Valley followed suit. Jean-Claude Abrioux, the neo-Gaullist mayor of Aulnay-sous-Bois, even extended the upper age limit to 13.

His first deputy mayor, Gérard Codron, says: "We believe it defies common sense for parents to allow their children to hang around on the streets at night." The order in Aulnay-sous-Bois will last only two months.

The neo-Gaullist mayor of Gien, Jean-Pierre Hurtinger, has introduced the curfew for the next six months. Police will be in charge of escorting children back to their parents. Unlike the system introduced in Dreux, children will not be first taken to a police station.

Supporters of the curfew point to the increase in juvenile delinquency, particularly among younger children. Recent cases of paedophilia have also been cited: the mayor and deputy of Dreux, the neo-Gaullist Gérard Hamel, intends to protect children's "physical and moral integrity".

Hurtinger says: "This order is not repressive. It should be seen rather as a helping hand to parents who have abdicated their responsibilities."

Picking up children who break the curfew will not be easy. The National Union of Uniformed Police (the best-represented union in the provinces) has expressed concern about "the extra hindrances to the accomplishment of policing tasks".

But the main limitation to applying the curfew is the law. On July 18, at the request of the prefecture of the Eure-et-Loir *département*, an administrative court in Orléans ruled that the Dreux order should be suspended, since it was a measure "likely to compromise the exercise of individual liberty".

The Vaucluse prefecture has also called for a suspension of the order in Sorgues. Meanwhile the mayor of Dreux has lodged an appeal against the Eure-et-Loir prefecture's decision with the Council of State.

(July 22)

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Quasi-slaves emerge from the shadows

Michèle Aulagnon reports on the harsh lives of some domestic workers in France

THE veil of silence that has shrouded the predicament of some immigrant domestic workers in France is beginning to be lifted. These workers, who speak poor French and have no residence permits, do unpaid work in appalling conditions, in most cases for compatriots. They are often brutally treated and illegally confined.

Until recently the victims were hidden from view by their employers and therefore unknown to officials, police or the social services. Those who managed to describe their plight to the authorities were usually deported, in accordance with legislation on illegal immigrants. Their employers, many of whom enjoyed diplomatic immunity, were unassailable. What weight does the word of a maid carry against that of an ambassador?

In March 1996, a young Eritrean maid was rescued from the home of a Lebanese diplomat posted in Paris. Mehret Kifle had been working long hours for several months without pay, had been forced to hand over her papers to the diplomat, and had been confined to his flat.

The France Committee against Modern Slavery (CFEM), an association set up in 1995, was responsible for rescuing her. Her employer was sent back to Lebanon, and Mehret, who now lives in France, received compensation.

"With the centenary of Victor Schoelcher's abolition of slavery coming up in a year's time, intolerable practices persist," says journalist Dominique Torrès, who founded CFEM. "The people we're talking about are probably far more numerous than is supposed. Until we set up the committee, we were told such things didn't exist in France."

CFEM has already dealt with 10 cases. Half a dozen have been referred to the courts, but so far no trials have taken place. The victims are mostly women who came to France from developing countries to escape poverty. Their pay is much lower than the French minimum wage, but much higher than what they could earn back home. However, it is rarely paid.

Their exploiters are not always wealthy. Marie-Laure, a young woman from the Ivory Coast who came to France at the age of 14, was enslaved by a working-class family of compatriots. She escaped and now lives in a hostel for young women. A preliminary inquiry into her case was opened on June 30.

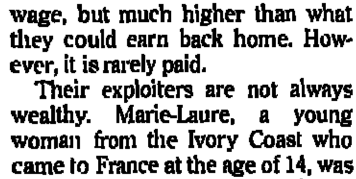
Bernard Mertz, the lawyer who has been dealing with the case, says victims are unable to assert their rights unaided. "They can lodge a complaint even though they are illegal immigrants, but many are reluctant to do so for fear of being deported. When a case like Marie-Laure's is exposed, the wheels of justice are set in motion. But otherwise these foreign maids are regarded as a bit of a nuisance."

Things get more complicated when the employer enjoys diplomatic immunity. The French foreign ministry tries to settle matters, usually out of court. In theory, all embassy staff get residence permits. But the system does not always work properly. A ministry spokesman says 90 per cent of embassies treat their staff properly: "We guarantee diplomatic immunity, but it's also our job to get the message across that it doesn't entitle those who enjoy it to do as they please."

The ministry can demand an explanation from the ambassador concerned and, if the case is extremely serious, request him to leave the country. One of the difficulties is to get employers to realise they have done something wrong. "Employers don't realise how grave their offences are," says Bernard Sexe, a ministry official. "Some even claim they're giving the girls a chance by bringing them to France."

Charline, aged 29, is a Madagascan from a poor background. She came to Paris in 1992 on a student visa to work for the daughter of her employers in Madagascar, a prominent family with government connections. Her two sisters, Célestine and Mariette, were already in France also working for children of her previous employers. Back home, their parents also worked for the same family.

Charline's dream — to earn enough to bring her daughter to France for medical treatment — soon turned into a nightmare. She was shut up in the house and had to look after her employer's three sons. Her day began at 8am and ended at midnight. She had to sleep on the floor. Her promised salary of 200 francs ($33) a month never materialised.



'It's getting harder and harder to hide good servants these days.'

The three sisters demanded their passports and wages. Célestine was the first to flee. She was taken in by a compatriot, Sahondra Rakotobe, who put her in touch with the Reverend Solofo, of the Madagascan congregation in Paris.

"We tried to find a solution for the three sisters, who had undoubtedly been maltreated," says Solofo. "Their employers agreed to send Célestine back to Madagascar and promised to return their passports. When Célestine arrived in Tananarive she was jailed. It was claimed she had been caught stealing. She has since been released. Mariette and Charline never got their papers back."

In November 1994 Charline escaped and contacted the Madagascan embassy. "She came with some churchmen," says an embassy spokesman. "We sent her to a hostel for Madagascan students. She couldn't at that time lodge a complaint against her employers as her papers weren't in order. We've since lost touch with her."

In April, CFEM published a letter in the Madagascan press and named her employers. The three sisters were first suspected of trying to make money out of the case, then of fomenting a political plot. Pressure was put on Mariette, who asked CFEM to stop handling her case.

In early June the interior ministry promised to treat Charline as a "special case" and give her a one-year residence permit. A further attempt at conciliation with her employers failed, and in mid-June CFEM brought a case against them. They in turn are considering legal action on the grounds that she tried to extort money from them.

"My clients have been pressurised and threatened," says their lawyer Olivier Hillel. "It's odd that the opposite party has been trying to negotiate, for if their accusations are as serious as they claim, there is nothing to negotiate."

Charline says that she wants to stay in France, attend the court proceedings and get the money she is owed. Solofo is trying to get her former employers to promise that there will be no retaliation against her family in Madagascar.

(July 15)

Jailed Turkish journalist wins award

Nicole Pope in Saray

THE media flocked this week to Saray prison, 120km from Istanbul, to attend the presentation of an international award for press freedom to Ocak Isik Yurtcu. Yurtcu, who is serving a 15-year jail sentence for having edited a pro-Kurdish daily, Ozgür Gündem, received the award from a delegation of foreign journalists led by Terry Anderson, a former United States hostage in Lebanon, and Peter Arnett, a journalist with CNN television.

They were accompanied by Robert Ménard, of Reporters Sans Frontières, and the Turkish writer Yashar Kemal. The delegation is trying to obtain the release of the journalists who are now held in Turkish jails.

The brief ceremony at Saray prison was a perfect illustration of the contradictions of the Turkish judicial system: on the one hand a reporter was jailed despite international protests, and on the other the authorities allowed the presentation, within prison walls, of a high-profile award that was bound to draw worldwide attention to a controversial case.

The prison governor even laid on refreshments for the visitors, and it was a prison warder who handed over the wreath of flowers to Yurtcu. The jailed journalist said: "I'd like to share this award with all those who fight for press freedom, not just in Turkey but throughout the world."

Necati Nurdal, an official from the justice ministry, justified the official line: "Turkey is a parliamentary democracy and a state that operates under the rule of law. If a crime is committed it is punished. There are three groups in Turkey: Marxist-Leninists, separatists and fundamentalists. They all have the same aim, of weakening democracy."

The foreign delegation met officials in Ankara during their visit. Anderson said he was extremely optimistic, as he had been promised that Yurtcu and others would be released very soon. The new prime minister, Mesut Yilmaz, has indeed stated that the law whereby editors are held responsible for what appears in their papers would soon be repealed.

Ménard, however, said that "unkept promises are a real problem in Turkey — they're not enough, we want action". A test-case will soon show whether the recently formed government intends to keep its promises. A new session of the trial of those who allegedly beat journalist Metin Göktepe to death in 1996 following his arrest by police, is due to open on July 24.

Five policemen have been charged with murder, and seven others with complicity in the crime. But 18 months after the young reporter's death, none of the suspects has yet appeared in court.

(July 19)

Italy's Mr 'Clean Hands' plans a comeback

Michel Bôle-Richard in Rome

ANTONIO DI PIETRO, the former investigating magistrate who hogged the limelight during Italy's "Clean Hands" operation against corruption in high places, is about to attempt a political comeback.

He has never made any secret of his intentions since resigning from the judiciary in December 1994. In May 1994, Di Pietro was offered a cabinet post by the new prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi, but he turned it down.

Exactly two years later, he agreed to join the centre-left government as public works minister. Six months later, in November 1996, the man who had come to symbolise the anti-corruption campaign became the focal point of a controversy and resigned amid a storm of accusations.

He denounced the "monstrous vendetta" that had been waged against him by those "who are trying to use me to discredit on the one hand the 'Clean Hands' investigations, and on the other the government and our institutions".

After that, "Tonino" worked as a university lecturer, then a lawyer. It was widely assumed that he would form his own party on the right of the political spectrum. He was thought to be waiting for an opportune moment to do so, having already formulated his 12-point political credo in December 1995.

In the end, Di Pietro decided this week to stand as senator for Florence on a centre-left Olive Tree coalition ticket. If elected in the autumn, he will replace Pino Arlacchi, an expert on the Mafia who has been appointed to head the United Nations Vienna office, which oversees crime prevention.

Di Pietro's decision, which will be a test of his popularity — Florence is a rock-solid leftwing seat — caused a sensation in political circles. The former magistrate has not yet managed to shake off the accusations of "misappropriation of public funds" and "abuse of office" that have been hanging over him.

His decision has come at a time when accusations of corruption against him have redoubled, particularly from one of his former friends, the building magnate Antonio d'Adamo, who claims that Di Pietro took gifts including a car, a mobile telephone and a bachelor flat in Milan.

Di Pietro's detractors immediately suspected him of trying to secure parliamentary immunity. "If I'm charged, I'll not stand as candidate," Di Pietro retorted, while Berlusconi claimed that anyone else in his place would already be behind bars.

Rightwing politicians are extremely aggrieved at having lost a leading political light that they thought they had won over. Berlusconi had hoped to gain the support of the very man who had first got him into trouble with the law in November 1994.

Many observers detect the hand of Berlusconi in the fresh accusations now being levelled against the man who was once his sworn enemy. The former prime minister has said more than once that he possesses important evidence against Di Pietro. "The party's over. Di Pietro is a paper tiger," according to Berlusconi.

Not everyone on the left is delighted at the prospect of Di Pietro joining their ranks. Both the Communists and the Greens think that he will turn out to be more of a nuisance than anything else. But whether he is elected as a senator or not, we can be sure the ambitious and controversial Antonio Di Pietro will remain in the news for some time to come.

(July 20-21)

Le Monde
Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
August 3 1997

The Washington Post

Anxiety Clouds ASEAN Meeting

Keith B. Richburg in Kuala Lumpur

SOUTHEAST Asian foreign ministers last week held a 30th anniversary meeting intended to showcase the region's peace and prosperity.

But the two-day session of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) closed with anxiety about attacks on local currencies, confusion over how to deal with a coup in Cambodia and concerns about a dispute with Washington over its decision to admit Burma to the group.

The Cambodian situation dominated most of ASEAN's agenda as the nine nations expressed uncertainty about how to proceed with mediation efforts to resolve the political conflict between Cambodian strongman Hun Sen and his ousted rival, Prince Norodom Ranariddh. Hun Sen had rebuffed regional ministers' efforts to arbitrate, calling the coup an "internal affair," but he recently has taken a more conciliatory line.

The nine foreign ministers, vowing to continue their mediation efforts, seek clarification from Hun Sen as to whether such efforts are wanted.

In Phnom Penh last week, Hun Sen added to the confusion with a vague statement welcoming regional efforts to promote peace and stability in Cambodia, but warning against "foreign interference into the internal affairs of Cambodia."

The group, meanwhile, stuck by its earlier decision to delay Cambodia's admission to ASEAN. Members did, however, allow Burma and Laos to join the group, bringing the number of ASEAN nations to nine.

The decision compounds a disagreement with Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, who arrived here last week for a separate series of meetings with the group. Albright has blasted ASEAN's decision to admit Burma as a member, citing the repression of political freedom and human rights abuses by the ruling junta.

En route here from the United States, Albright said the decision to allow Burma to join ASEAN marked "another break to the region's progress." She added that, "Burma may be inside ASEAN, but it will remain outside the Southeast Asian mainstream."

In a closing press conference, Malaysian Foreign Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who holds the group's rotating chairmanship, defended the decision to allow Burma to join and said that the other nations of the region believe that "constructive engagement" with the junta is the most effective way to move Burma away from repression and toward democratic reform.

"The constructive engagement relationship with them will continue," Badawi said. Having Burma at the meeting table, he said, means "we have been able to express to them what our concerns are."

Badawi added that the group's quiet pressure already has contributed to "some interesting developments" in Burma, such as moves by the junta to institutionalize some constitutional reforms, which Badawi said marked the first step toward greater democratization.

Badawi said he realizes that having Burma represented in ASEAN puts Albright in a difficult position, considering that the United States ranks the Burmese government as one of the world's worst human rights abusers. But he added, "I can't help it if she is uncomfortable."



A nun lights incense at a Buddhist temple in Phnom Penh as the Cambodian capital tries to return to normality PHOTO: RICHARD [illegible]

The ASEAN ministers also expressed concern over recent speculative attacks that have forced a devaluation of the Thai currency, the baht, while forcing intervention by central banks across the region to shore up other currencies, particularly the Malaysian ringgit, the Indonesian rupiah and the Philippine peso.

The group blamed the regional currency crisis on a "well-coordinated attack" by outside speculators and foreign currency manipulators, and Badawi said the attacks have "certainly disrupted our economic progress."

The group, in a final communique, pledged "further intensification" of efforts to coordinate a united response from the region's central banks to protect local currencies. But the vow failed to include any specific plan.

No Intelligence in Shooting the Messenger

OPINION
Jim Hoagland

MARKING its 50th birthday, the Central Intelligence Agency needs bold, creative leadership to overcome its current ailments. Instead, new director George J. Tenet starts his tenure by attempting an old bureaucratic dodge: shooting the messenger who brings unwelcome news.

The messenger in Tenet's sights is Warren Marik, a former CIA officer who disclosed his role in the agency's failed effort to overthrow Iraq's Saddam Hussein in separate interviews with The Washington Post and ABC Television.

Marik's story of the covert debacle, which cost at least $110 million, should have triggered investigations by the agency, the White House and Congress of this particular operation and the future of covert action. Along with the Bay of Pigs in 1961, Iraq stands as the agency's most expensive and embarrassing flop since it was founded on July 26, 1947.

Instead, Tenet has asked the Justice Department to determine if Marik violated his confidentiality agreement with the spy agency by disclosing classified information.

Imagine Tenet as the owner of the Titanic who greets news of the luxury liner's sinking by ordering an investigation of the radio operator who sent out distress signals, and you get the picture.

In Washington's labyrinth of bureaucracy and secrecy, a policy failure operates like a shaky bank loan: If big enough, it intimidates everybody connected with it into silence and inaction. Only foot soldiers like Marik risk being sacrificed, and only if they pipe up.

Those who draw up the grand schemes and give orders seem to fall effortlessly upward or sideways. John Deutch, the CIA director who oversaw the Iraq debacle, is now comfortably back at MIT and defending the flawed strategy he chose. His deputy was Tenet, confirmed by the Senate last month as Deutch's successor.

The current London station chief, who played a key supervisory role in the Iraq failure, reached that exalted position after involvement in the Iran-contra scandal and after failing to spot Aldrich Ames as a Soviet spy when he was Ames' boss in Rome.

Instead of tackling institutional accountability, Tenet pursues Marik, a 52-year-old covert operator who retired six months ago and who spoke out in June hoping to get the agency to shift its strategy in Iraq. Marik told me Saddam can be undermined if the agency re-engages in a long-term propaganda and political effort, rather than betting everything on a quick silver-bullet coup scenario.

The new CIA director has asked the Justice Department to consider charges against Marik even though prosecutions are rarely brought in cases where other agents' identities, sources and methods have not been compromised by the ex-agent. This referral seems to be aimed at intimidating other potential whistle-blowers.

Such an approach smacks of a cynicism that eats at the soul of an agency that must above all else believe in itself and its mission. Bureaucratic dodges and gamesmanship have corroded the core values of America's only true secret service as fundamentally as the loss of the Soviet enemy has clouded its vision of its future.

It is time for Congress and the White House to investigate this idea: Sharply pare down the $3-billion-a-year agency and concentrate its efforts on analysis and on no more than two or three vital covert operations, including Iraq. Listen to veteran and independent-minded agents like Marik instead of hounding them.

But Congress is as mute as the White House and the agency leadership when it comes to asking sharp questions about the Iraq operation. There is a reason: The debacle in Iraq shows the continuing decline of congressional oversight as a check on mismanagement and misbehavior at the CIA.

There is icing for this cake of investigating the wrong people on the wrong charges. It will come in the Senate hearing into President Clinton's campaign finance problems. Republican senators want to know more about the telephone call someone at the Democratic National Committee made to a CIA officer that helped Middle East financier Roger Tamraz gain access to the White House.

The call went to "Bob," the agent in charge of the failed military campaign in northern Iraq, agency sources tell me. Having sailed through a perfunctory lie detector test on his role in Iraq and been put back to work, Bob's career is at risk today not for his work on coup plots but his role in dialing for campaign dollars.

Welcome to Clintonian Washington, Bob.

The House And the Tax On Tobacco

EDITORIAL

THE SENATE included in its version of the budget-balancing bill a modest, 20-cent-a-pack cigarette-tax increase meant in part to finance a children's health initiative and in part to deter smoking, particularly among children to whom the 20 cents might matter. It is eminently sensible legislation, good policy and, you would think, good politics as well. The Senate vote was 80 to 19; the president has embraced the idea. But the House leadership, for what seem to us the worst of political and ideological reasons, is resisting, and the tax was dropped from the combined House-Senate bill that is now the subject of White House-congressional Republican negotiations.

Republicans are fond of saying you ought not tax behavior you want to encourage, only behavior you want to suppress. Here is a deadly product, the use of which is one of the great public health problems in the society, a major source of disease, contributor to health care costs and cause of other kinds of loss. We have just gone through a couple of months of extraordinary negotiations between the tobacco companies and state attorneys general who were suing them, in which the companies acknowledged the harm that tobacco does and offered certain reparations. You heard a lot of speeches over those months about the evils of smoking, its addictiveness, the need to discourage it among children especially, etc. The Senate legislation would be a step in that direction.

But the House leaders are opposed to tax increases — it seems not to matter what kind — and don't want to create what they say would be a new spending program (to reduce the number of children without health insurance) either. They also have the barest of majorities, and reportedly seek to protect Republican members from tobacco-producing states whose reelection they have convinced themselves a tobacco tax increase could threaten. If the choice is children's health vs. politicians' health, thus narrowly defined, perhaps the children should look elsewhere.

The House folks say they may yet agree to a tobacco tax increase if they need the money, but not to add to the $16 billion over five years already in the budget for children's health. They'd rather spend it on something else — like what? A capital gains taxcut? The budget process is often pretty murky, but every once in awhile it produces a moment of clarity, a clear test of the members' priorities. This is one of those moments. The House Republicans are on the wrong side.

Swiss Bank List Opens Doors to Hope

John M. Goshko in New York

MADELEINE KUNIN was a child of 7 when her Jewish family, fearing a possible Nazi invasion, fled her native Switzerland. She returned there last year as the ambassador of her adopted country, the United States.

Now, in a dramatic underscoring of how the echoes of a tragic time still reverberate, Kunin apparently has found her mother's name on the list of 1,756 dormant World War II-era accounts published last week by Swiss banks.

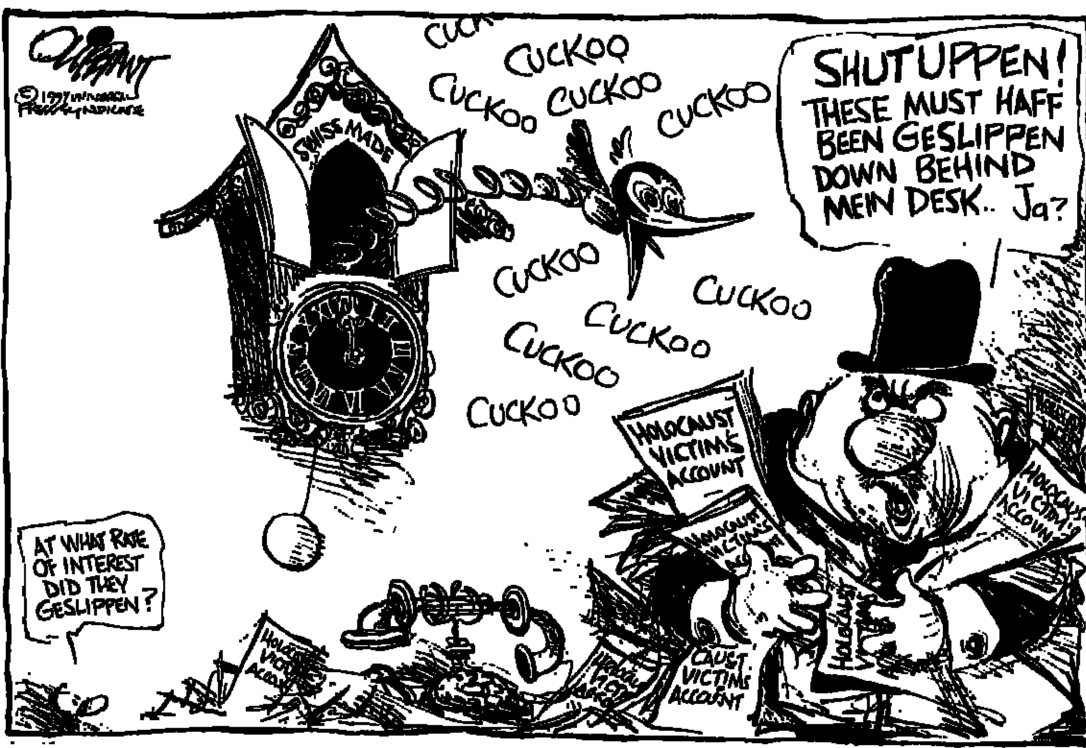
Kunin's mother, who brought her young daughter and son to New York during the early days of the war, died in Burlington, Vermont, in 1969. Kunin will go through the filing process set up by the banks in search of more information, an embassy spokeswoman said.

For Kunin — and for others who were less fortunate and lost loved ones in the Holocaust — publication of the list in 28 countries may shed a bit of light on previously obscured corners of their personal histories. For some, it also may allow access to assets — in most cases apparently of modest value — that belonged to long-dead relatives and have been hidden for more than a half-century behind the previously impregnable wall of secrecy imposed by Swiss banking laws.

But while publication of the list may fill in the blanks for a few, for many others — both Jews and non-Jews — it leaves unresolved their search for answers about the interaction of Swiss banks with their families.

These banks, which once had the reputation of being the surest guarantor of the safety of their clients' accounts, now stand accused of using the secrecy laws to keep the assets of Holocaust victims beyond the reach of their rightful heirs.

Although publication of the list marks the first step in an attempt to make amends, critics say there is a big question about whether the banks can restore their reputation for probity.



The heads of major Jewish groups in the United States and abroad, as well as elected officials such as Sen. Alfonse M. D'Amato, R-New York, have charged that the banks sought for years to minimize the number of accounts that might be involved and the total amount of money in them.

For a long time, the banks said there probably was no more than $2 million, but the total in those accounts made public last week was estimated at $42 million.

"It was part of a pattern of obfuscation, a pattern of withholding . . . that is 50 years overdue," D'Amato said. Thomas Lyssy, vice president of the Swiss Jewish Federation, asserted that "the credibility of the banks is shattered."

While the banks' actions are of considerable interest to international bankers and lawyers, most of the world's attention in recent days has been focused on the individual stories told, or left untold, by the list.

As expected, there were Jews trying to save some funds and valuables from Nazi persecution. There were also people only peripherally involved with what was going on in Europe during the war years.

And there apparently even was a scattering of Nazi officials or collaborators putting away nest eggs in neutral Switzerland that might have included loot from Jewish victims.

In Israel, where there are more than 300,000 Holocaust survivors, Gretta Landsburg, a 52-year-old schoolteacher whose parents escaped from Germany to Israel in 1937, spotted what she believes was her mother's maiden name.

"Both my mother and my father are dead now," she said. "But I never knew my mother's or my father's family. They were murdered before I was born. Will the money make up for the suffering? Will it make up for having no family — no aunts, no uncles, no grandparents?"

Some who have searched for years for some sign of family assets were destined to suffer new disappointment. Here in New York, Peter Bloch, 75, recalls vividly how in 1936 or 1937 his mother made a perilous trip to Basel, Switzerland, to entrust the family's savings to a distant relative there.

"In 1942 when I got to Switzerland, I wrote to [the relative] and he answered that he had no money belonging to my family . . . I looked at the list to see if his or my family name was there. But I didn't have much hope. He probably just took the money from my mother and put it in his pocket without ever opening an account."

The accounts included in last week's published list are only those that were opened by non-Swiss in the period before or during the war and that have been dormant since 1945. A much larger list of more than 20,000 accounts that were opened by Swiss citizens, who might have been acting as proxies for people wanting to conceal their identities, is to be published in October.

Judicial Voice of Social Revolution

OBITUARY
William Brennan

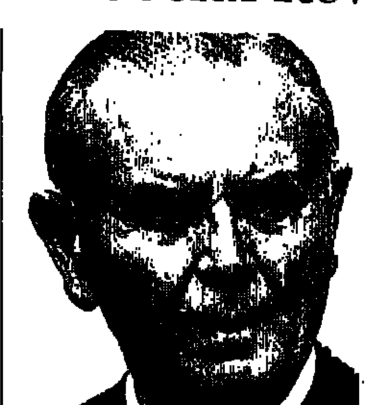
FORMER Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan Jr., the progressive voice of the modern court and a justice unequaled for his influence on American life, died last week. He was 91.

During his 34 years on the court, Brennan pushed his colleagues to take on a variety of social issues and was widely recognized as the chief strategist behind the court's civil rights revolution.

He was the architect of rulings that expanded rights of racial minorities and women; led to reapportionment of voting districts guaranteeing the ideal of "one person, one vote;" and enhanced First Amendment freedom for newspapers and other media.

Brennan was recognized across the political spectrum not only for his legal mastery but as a defender of individual liberty and a voice of civility. Poor health forced his retirement from the court in 1990.

Justice David H. Souter has said of the man he succeeded on the court: "One can agree with the Brennan opinions and one may disagree with them, but their collective influence is an enormously powerful defining force in the contemporary life of this republic."


Brennan: prized individual rights

What distinguished Brennan was his ability to forcefully articulate a liberal vision of judging. It was a vision that found the essential meaning of the Constitution not in the past but in contemporary life, prized individual rights beyond what was explicitly written in the text, and compelled him to reach out to right perceived wrongs.

Brennan was appointed to the court by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956, three years after Earl Warren became chief justice. And Brennan's unmatched ability to build consensus made him a central figure in the Warren Court and a key participant in its most celebrated decisions.

He is considered the primary writer of the 1958 Cooper v. Aaron decision that forced school officials to accelerate classroom integration in the face of mass resistance. Brennan also was the author of a 1962 decision that permitted federal courts for the first time to hear constitutional challenges to a state's distribution of voters, a ruling that brought new fairness to the sharing of political power between rural and urban America.

He led the majority to bolster the right of free speech, including a 1964 opinion that requires public figures who sue for libel to prove "actual malice" on the part of the media.

When Warren was succeeded as chief justice by Warren E. Burger and then William H. Rehnquist, the court began to move gradually to the right, and many of the rulings from the Warren era were reversed. But several Brennan decisions endured.

Brennan was born in Newark on April 25, 1906, the second-oldest of eight children of Irish immigrant parents. His father worked as a laborer in a brewery and became a union leader and local politician.

Brennan received a scholarship to Harvard Law School. Upon graduation in 1931, he joined a Newark law firm, Pitney, Hardin & Skinner, practicing there until he entered the Army in 1942. While in the military, he handled labor disputes on the staff of the undersecretary of war.

He returned to his law firm and began specializing in labor law before being appointed to the New Jersey bench. In 1949 Republican Gov. Alfred E. Driscoll named him to the state superior court. Three years later, Driscoll elevated him to the New Jersey Supreme Court.

Brennan's nomination to the high court apparently came as a surprise. He later said no one in the Eisenhower administration asked him a single question about his politics or judicial philosophy.

Joan Biskupic

William Joseph Brennan Jr, lawyer, born April 25, 1906; died July 24, 1997

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Crime Soars As Brazil Police Strike

Anthony Faiola in Recife

IN FIVE chaotic days in this beachside metropolis, the daily homicide rate has tripled. Eight banks have been robbed. Gangs have run wild through a shopping mall and driven through upper-class neighborhoods firing guns. And no one is obeying the traffic laws.

Recife, a city of 2 million in the poor northeastern state of Pernambuco, is just one of several cities and towns across Brazil ravaged by a rash of police strikes that have caused a national crisis. Army troops arrived here last month to keep the peace, but the 3,000 soldiers have been unable to do the job of 18,000 metro-area police officers out on strike.

"We are afraid to leave our homes; we are afraid to be anywhere out on the streets," said Jaqueline Acioli, 25, as she stood outside the Recife morgue. "How can this be happening? This is total madness." Her brother was fatally shot by robbers at his home last week.

Since the illegal strike over wages began here last month, the crime wave has tested the limits of the morgue and flooded the largest state hospital, where gunshot and stabbing victims are stretched out on hallway floors. Several pharmacies have been raided by bandits for drugs.

"There has been nothing like this here in decades, since the days of the military coup," said Roberto Franca, justice secretary of Pernambuco state, referring to a military takeover in 1964. "This kind of lawlessness is unprecedented here."

The police strikes, which began in June in the southeastern state of Minas Gerais, arose over low pay and, in many states, fiscal crises that have blocked pay raises. Rank-and-file officers argue that they cannot survive on their meager salaries. Here in Recife, the average patrolman makes about $286 a month, while senior officers often take home 15 times that amount.

The strikes, which are illegal under Brazil's constitution, have spread through 15 of Brazil's 27 states. In addition to crippling the northeast and southeast, they appear to be moving into Brazil's southernmost states, home to the country's most populous cities and crucial industries. In Sao Paulo, 2,000 police officers and supporters marched last week, threatening to strike if their wages are not increased by at least 33 percent. Police also are prepared to strike in Rio Grande do Sul state.

The army has been called out to protect local government buildings in four states but has met resistance not only from lawbreakers, but from striking police officers. In the northeastern state of Alagoas, where police have not been paid in six months, gunfights broke out between troops and policemen wearing black masks and wielding pistols. The governor of the cash-strapped state threw up his hands and resigned.

Some Brazilians are saying that the strikes amount to blackmail; officials are faced with the choice of increasing police pay or leaving the streets of major cities unprotected. In Minas Gerais, the governor gave in, offering substantial raises that many analysts said the city cannot afford.

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Night is Right for 24-Hour Business

Linton Weeks

AROUND 1:30 on a Wednesday morning, shoppers prowl the aisles of a Virginia Wal-Mart. Photographer John Fleener, 37, looks for allergy relief. Robert Owen, 31, who just finished his shift delivering pizzas for a Domino's in Fairfax, cradles four bottles of apple cider. Denise Cooper, 34, tucks boxes of toothpaste into her basket.

An hour later at a Maryland Kinko's business services center, John Thompson and his wife, Andrea, rework a presentation they will make on Thursday at Scotland AME Zion Church. Another 20-odd customers are scattered about the shop. "A lot of people do their day work here at night," says the night manager, Roger Sindelar.

Meanwhile, all across the country, people are dialing away in the wee hours to order freesia from 1-800-FLOWERS, silk teddies from Victoria's Secret, canoes from L.L. Bean. And they are paying bills, planning trips and buying and selling stock on the Internet.

As Ernest Hemingway told Lillian Ross in his oblique way, "Time is the least thing we have of." Americans are finding ways to make of it the most.

"Compared to Europe, the U.S. is miles ahead in mining the economic value of time," said L. Michael Hager, director of the International Development Law Institute in Rome, who studies time as an economic resource.

He cited two reasons for America's preeminence: fewer legal restrictions on business opening hours than in Europe and the higher European social-welfare costs, which create a disincentive to hiring new employees for night shifts.

Those observations were echoed at the recent economic summit in Denver where the United States bragged about its winning economic style. The U.S. representatives said the continental Europeans are mired in an antiquated system that protects existing jobs and businesses through rules, regulations and union contracts that stifle innovation.

"European traditions also thwart change," Hager said. "For example, much of the small business in Italy is family-owned and operated. Extending hours means going outside the family for labor, which is not the norm. America, on the other hand, is synonymous with new ideas, entrepreneurship and business competition."

For example: Fitness buff Ernesto Tey, 23, an employee at Speedware USA in San Ramon, California, likes to pump iron after midnight. "In a hectic and stressful day," says Tey, "knowing I can work out either early in the morning or late at night makes it that much easier to stay in shape." He frequents a gym run by California-based 24 Hour Fitness, which offers round-the-clock facilities for weekday workouts at locations throughout the western United States.

In St. Paul, Minnesota, customers of Highgrove Community Federal Credit Union can call a phone number any time, day or night, to apply for a loan. In many cases, the credit union says, applicants are told within an hour whether their request has been accepted.

For the past three years, Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York has kept its computer room — with 16 or so terminals — open all the time for night-owl medical students to do their research.

Sharon Williams, a Baltimore entrepreneur, founded a full-service secretarial support company in 1990 called the 24-Hour Secretary. For example, someone called at 3 a.m. recently and said he needed a report typed up by 7 a.m. He dictated, and the report was e-mailed by the deadline, spell-checked and professionally formatted.

And the Internet has opened up all kinds of possibilities for 24-hour activity. North Olmsted, Ohio, offers its residents a 24-hour town hall. Visitors can find building permit forms, information on city services and a schedule of events. Mayor Ed Boyle has a section where he communicates with his constituents and so does the school system. The 24 Hour Mall brings together more than two dozen stores for dawn-to-dawn shopping.

Sindelar, the Kinko's night manager, put it this way: "The United States is not used to waiting. In Europe, they queue up. Here, they don't."

In the 24-hour society, the banking industry is encouraging customers to use what it refers to as "different delivery channels" to move money around the clock.

Today more than 140,000 automated teller machines dot the U.S. map. Internet banking is available from about 90 percent of the country's 300 major banks, according to American Banker, a trade publication. And more banking is done, at all hours, by telephone.

Bell Atlantic is so convinced that more people are taking care of business at all hours, the telephone company has opened a 24-hour customer service center in Calverton, Maryland. "A lot of our customers cannot call us until they get home from work," spokesman Michel Daley said. Operators will be standing by to help folks buy a telephone, explain service options and decipher the monthly bill.

Other kinds of round-the-clock telephone services also proliferate: Flower sales. Counseling services. Sex chat lines.

"Uncle Johnny" Jefferson Green of Dallas figured out that convenience was the key 70 years ago. He kept his Southland Ice Dock open after grocery stores had closed. In the spring of 1927 the Texas iceman began carrying staples such as bread, eggs and milk. Eventually, all the Southland franchises followed suit and a new company was named for the hours they kept. The 7-Eleven stores are now open 24 hours a day.

"We're in a world that almost never stops," said Kinko's Sindelar. "People hardly ever sleep, especially in this city. Washington is a town of pressure."

Across the large room, drummer Mike Kanin, 19, and bassist Paul Selby, 20, of the band the Better Automatic pieced together an advertisement for their friend's 'zine. Selby said he loves the early hours. "The effective population is reduced at night. It's good — if you're antisocial."

During his 11:30pm-to-9am shift, said Sindelar, some 100 to 300 folks will pass through — people wanting everything from birth announcements to funeral programs. "Everyone's under an enormous amount of stress and strain," he said. People used to wait for what they wanted, "but that attitude's changed."

And so the trend evolved — from 7-Elevens to all-night diners, grocery stores and drugstores to round-the-clock office-supply stores and discount super-stores to ATMs and call centers to . . . where?

Moore may be right when he says that there are some things people won't do on computers. But there are plenty of things they will do, and with the Internet, they can do them when they want to.

In the small hours at the Virginia Wal-Mart, cellular phone purveyor Eva Shorts, 43, and her son Robert, 22, wheeled a basket up and down the aisle. "We're night people," explained Shorts. "If there were other stores open, I'd go to them, too."


Read all over . . . More and more people in the United States are seeking services — from business to pleasure — outside conventional work hours
PHOTO: KEITH CARDWELL

Haiti's Misery Brings Final R.I.P-Off

Serge F. Kovaleski
In Port-au-Prince

IN THIS destitute country, not even the dead are sacred. The capital's main cemetery — a maze of above-ground tombs in which the nation's poorest and its most powerful have been laid to rest — has been overrun by looters in search of bronze and iron coffin handles, gold teeth, jewelry, clothing and whatever else the deceased have to offer.

Rampaging mostly at night, grave robbers bash gaping holes through tombs and pry open caskets, stripping them of anything remotely valuable that can fetch money on the streets. Corpses and piles of bones are dumped on the ground, left to rot in the next day's sun.

The pilfering is so rampant that empty-handed vandals gather each morning inside the cemetery's front gates waiting for families to pay them to repair the violated mausoleums.

It can be a matter of hours from the time a body is buried until a crypt is ransacked. And little is spared, including flowers and wreaths placed in memory of the dead that pillagers pluck and sell for quick cash, usually to other bereaved relatives visiting the same place.

"The day after I buried my father, I went to visit him, and his tomb was destroyed. They dragged his coffin out, ripped the handles off and stole the shoes right off his feet," said Solange Justin. "They left him out there like a dead animal. Things are so dire in our country that you can't even bury a loved one with dignity."

The wave of ghoulish assaults on the cemetery is one of the most shocking signs of how desperate life is here.

Authorities say the looting began in earnest after international trade sanctions were imposed on Haiti in 1991. The measures were intended to pressure the country's military regime to accept the return of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the president who had been ousted in a coup. But their most immediate and noticeable effect was to drive up prices.

The sanctions finally were lifted in late 1994 after U.S. troops were deployed here to help restore democratic rule and put Aristide back in power in the Presidential Palace.

At the time of the American occupation, hopes were high that the country's economic situation would improve. But a turnaround has yet to materialize, and authorities say more people are resorting to theft, including preying on the dead, as discontent mounts over the rising cost of living, astronomical unemployment and a widespread feeling among Haitians that the country is going nowhere.

Municipal officials said the criminal activity in the publicly run cemetery is disturbing not only because it shows a callous disrespect for the dead, but because the scattered bodies can spread disease in a city already ravaged by debilitating poverty.

"It is becoming a serious health problem," said Louis Maccena, assistant director of the mayor's social affairs office.

The cemetery was once one of the most hallowed grounds in this capital, where families would peacefully promenade past rows of elaborately decorated tombs and pay respect to the dead.

It is also the resting place for some of Haiti's most infamous leaders, including longtime dictator Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier, whose crypt also has been looted.

Maccena said it is difficult to keep looters out of the cemetery because the wall ringing it is low and easily scaled at almost any point. City officials said the number of armed security guards patrolling the grounds has been increased. But during several visits to the site, a reporter saw only one guard, and he was sitting in the front office.

Throughout the tangle of mausoleums, people eager to earn money performing repairs — some of whom authorities believe are also responsible for the looting — roamed freely, as did beggars soliciting mourners in funeral processions.

Near the front gates — and not far from a cross associated with the voodoo spirit of the dead, Baron Samedi — a corpse lay in thick weeds, its casket smashed to pieces and stripped of metal fittings.

Authorities said that casket handles, which can cost more than $100 in funeral parlors, are the targets of choice for thieves, who resell them for as much as $20 — a substantial sum in a country where the average per capita income is estimated at less than $250 a year.

There have also been instances in which entire caskets have been emptied, carried off and sold to newly bereaved families.

But bereaved families have begun taking matters into their own hands to protect the final resting places of their loved ones. A number of the tombs, some of them multi-story structures of marble with sliding glass doors, are secured by large steel gates latched shut by padlocks.

Others have been more crudely repaired or resealed, their bludgeoned facades sealed with rocks, paper, cloth, grass or whatever else was available at the time. Still other damaged tombs are emblazoned with the word "Reparacion," indicating they are still in need of work.

"There is misery in this country, and people will do anything for money, even if it means stealing from the dead," said one of the many unofficial repair hands at the cemetery, who claimed he is paid roughly $2 for each tomb he fixes.

"There is money in looting, but there is also money in putting coffins back in their place and patching up the holes," he said.

Natural History

Claire Messud

COLD MOUNTAIN
By Charles Frazier
Atlantic Monthly. 356pp. $24

CONTEMPORARY fiction continues to tackle the Civil War because its ramifications are ubiquitous still: That brutal conflict marks the watershed of American modernity, as the First World War marks Europe's. Significantly, Charles Frazier's rich first novel addresses that watershed not only in its themes but in its very structure.

Cold Mountain comprises the interwoven narratives of a Confederate soldier named Inman and his intended, a young woman named Ada Monroe. Wounded at Petersburg and transferred to a Tennessee hospital in the summer of 1864, Inman deserts and heads for his home in the mountains of North Carolina, a journey fraught with adventures and pitfalls.

Meanwhile, Ada, the well-born daughter of a Charleston minister, struggles to reconstruct her life after her father's death, opting to remain at their remote farm rather than return to the city dependent upon her father's friends. Joined by a tough local girl named Ruby, Ada comes to value nature and its gifts, the fruits of hard labor and the intensity of the seasons. As the lovers' reunion approaches, both are aware of their internal (and external) transformations, irrevocable changes that reflect those of the country in which they live.

Their stories, in spite of the overlapping menace of the war, are very different. Inman's is emphatically picaresque, a progression of grotesque and fantastic encounters reminiscent of Fielding or Richardson. He saves a woman from a murderous preacher; he falls into the clutches of a bloated fellow named Junior and his harem of sluttish women, who turn him over to the Home Guard; he takes refuge in the home of a frail widow and saves her and her infant from marauding Federals. Inman moves through these adventures like a cipher, alternately a hero and a victim of action.



ILLUSTRATION : ANTHONY RUSSO

Ada's chapters, focused on the farm and her reflections upon it, and upon her growing friendship with Ruby, form a more contemporary tale, the exploration of a woman's psychological development in communion with the stable but seasonal natural world in which she is immersed. Ada and Inman's union is, in a sense, the literary confrontation of history and the present. Readers impatient with the relentless linearity of Inman's progress will find respite in Ada's concentric growth, and vice versa.

Throughout, Frazier has adopted an antiquated style to authenticate the 19th-century Southern world. His locutions sound unnatural to the contemporary ear — "There was scant humidity in the air for a change and all the colors and edges of things seemed crisp beyond the natural" — and his vocabulary thrills in its oddity. He has captured his characters' lost quotidian speech, and the novel's pages are peppered with words such as "hinnies," "spavins," and "taliped".

This rhetorical analepsis alone makes Cold Mountain an exciting work of fiction, but Frazier's prose, consistent and precise, goes further. He writes evocatively about the region's flora and fauna and about man's relationship to it. When Ada observes a heron, he notes that "the beak of it was black on top and yellow underneath, and the light shone off it with muted sheen as from satin or chipped flint". When Inman encounters a catfish, Frazier records: "It was stout as a tub. It was ugly in the face with its tiny eyes and pale barbels run out from its mouth and wagging in the current."

The use of plants for medicinal purposes, the calculation of time and seasons by the movement of the stars, the foraging for and preparation of food — all are conveyed in meticulous detail. Cold Mountain delights, above all, as an exceedingly free natural history, in which Frazier's characters learn and live by their surroundings.

What disappoints, in this fine debut, is its cinematic conclusion, a carefully contrived display of the bittersweet. It is an ending that relies unabashedly on the conventions of romance; and while Frazier has drawn on other literary conventions — the picaresque and the psychological novel — one might have hoped that their daring conflation would produce a less predictable result. This said, the fate of Frazier's protagonists is not, perhaps, so important. He notes that "Inman had seen so much death it had come to seem a random thing entirely", and the narrative reinforces this. Ultimately, it is not the people who endure but the locale. Cold Mountain, the title, is the novel's true core.

Universal Mystery

Joel Achenbach

THE WHOLE SHEBANG
A State-of-the-Universe(s) Report
By Timothy Ferris
Simon & Schuster. 393pp. $25

AMBITIOUS physicists would very much like to explain away the entire universe, drain it of mystery, decode its essence. They'd like to finish once and for all the job begun thousands of years ago by astrologers, shamans, and lonely shepherds staring into the night sky. Ideally, physicists would hope to boil the universe down to a few simple, aesthetically pleasing equations. They would like the universe to be something less than a miracle. "The task of the physicist is to see through the appearances down to the underlying, very simple, symmetric reality," Timothy Ferris writes in his new book, The Whole Shebang.

But clearly the physicists still have a lot of explaining to do. They have detected the expansion of the universe, with its implication that the universe was once exceedingly small, but there are still debates about the pace of the expansion, the age of the universe, and its ultimate destiny (dissipation? collapse?). They have a well-established quantum theory that explains how particles and forces interact on the smallest of scales, but which has so far been unable to account for the force of gravity. Haunting the entire process is the mystery of why there's a universe at all: Why is there something rather than nothing?

In the search for answers, cosmology has been merging with particle physics. To figure out the world of the very large, cosmologists have to understand the realm of the very small. This creates a challenge not only for scientists but also for the average lay reader of science books. Many of us may feel mentally prepared to go on a journey across the starry expanse of the universe but not necessarily down into the murky interior of the atom.

Ferris, fortunately, is a compassionate and clever guide. As one of the planet's premier science writers, he knows that his job is not to try to impress the physicists. Bravely he takes the reader into the esoteric realm of dark matter, "spacetime foam", and 10-dimensional superstrings. His description of superstring theory is extremely nimble:

"Strings are just curved space. The central riddle of genesis — how can the universe have come into being, if, as Shakespeare put it, 'Nothing can be made out of nothing'? — is answered thus: Everything is nothing, in a sense, for all is made of space, which in this context means pure geometry."

One can sense that at times even Ferris is uncomfortable with the abstruse nature of modern cosmology, as when he writes: "Readers who are marking their scorecards will want to note that the neutralino is a linear combination of the supersymmetric partners of the photon, of an early-universe boson called the Z0 and of the theoretical Higgs boson."

Make no mistake: Cosmology remains a field heavily shot through with philosophical speculation. Ferris includes a playful chapter on theology, guessing that God would want to create a universe that was itself creative, using life as a driving agent for reversing the dreariness of entropy, the tendency for heat to dissipate and orderly systems to fall apart.

Theology spawned cosmology, but as cosmology probes ever deeper into the mystery of the universe it tends to circle back to [illegible]. Last year John Horgan, a writer for Scientific American, published a book called The End Of Science, which contended that our greatest scientific achievements (the theory of evolution or the discovery of the expansion of the universe) are behind us, that most future discoveries will either be trivial or irrelevant to the world in which we live.

Ferris would contend otherwise. No one even knows the biology of the universe or whether ours is the one cosmos among an infinitude.

If there are more great discoveries to be made, Ferris would be someone you'd want around to explain them. He's been inspecting the cosmos now for two decades, and he seems to have it sussed out.

Particle chase, page 22

Puckish Humor From Behind Bars

Fred Hiatt

THE COURAGE TO STAND ALONE
Letters From Prison
and Other Writings
By Wei Jingsheng
Viking. 283pp. $23.95

WEI JINGSHENG, China's leading dissident, is in prison, and has been for all but seven months of the past 18 years. This book was assembled without his knowledge by relatives in China and admirers in the West, who implicitly warn the reader that we may find the book slow going. They are wrong. Despite all the limitations, it makes for compelling reading.

The limitations stem from Wei's circumstances. In prison from 1979 to 1993, he was sharply restricted in what he could write, and to whom. He could only allude to the tortures he was subjected to, the indignities of his living conditions, the deterioration of his health despite his youth, the loss of his teeth from malnutrition. He planned, upon his release, to expand these largely philosophical letters into a more flesh-and-blood autobiography; but the regime did not give him time to do so before throwing him back in jail.

Yet Wei's appealing character gradually reveals itself through these letters all the same: his intelligence, his puckish humor, his stubborn courage and, most of all, his reckless, principled compulsion to educate his jailers — that is to say, China's authoritarian leaders — on the necessity for democracy.

His capacity to make fun of himself is astonishing, and his tweaking of China's leaders rarely flags. "Life isn't easy for either of us," he writes to paramount leader Deng Xiaoping. "It's just that I am not the one making your life difficult, while you're the one making it hard for me." And when China's leaders appear not to be taking his advice — which he offers on every conceivable subject, from writing a new constitution to designing an "energy-saving pressure cooker with timer" — he excuses them, writing, "You probably just overlooked it".

In fact, most of these letters were apparently never mailed. We can read the letters now only because, when Wei was offered his freedom in 1993, he refused to leave his cell without his file of sent and unsent correspondence — itself an almost unimaginable act of defiant courage. At the time, China was seeking to improve its image in order to win the right to host the 2000 Olympics, and Wei sensed his brief advantage. During his fleeting period of freedom, he spoke out as fearlessly as ever. And when Sydney, Australia, won the Olympic games, China's leaders threw Wei back into jail. No letters have emerged since.

Most of the letters in this book are addressed to China's leaders, since Wei was discouraged from writing to relatives but encouraged to comment on politics as (his wardens hoped) a valuable method of self-criticism. Instead, he deflates China's propaganda and pretensions with a clarity and simplicity that stem from questioning everything and puzzling things out for himself, from first principles. "A lack of democracy is the principal reason for China's many problems," he writes. And: "The goodness or badness of a person's character . . . [is] not absolutely determined by what class he was born into." Revolutionary ideas, to be sure. Early on, Wei recognizes that the true danger in China is fascism, or national socialism — and that economic growth alone will not wipe out that danger.

Like many of his generation, Wei had little choice but to educate himself. Born in 1950 to loyal, mid-level Communist Party cadres, he was caught up in the frenzy of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. Instead of entering high school, Wei became a Red Guard, a self-described "fanatic Maoist" who believed, at first, that the system only needed purifying. The injustices he saw as he traveled the country eventually led him to understand that the system itself, not its imperfect implementation, was at fault.

During the next decade, he served in the army and worked as an electrician in the Beijing Zoo. In 1978, he wrote and posted his famous wall poster, "The Fifth Modernization: Democracy." His respect for individual rights in that seminal work was enough of a threat to China's dictators to land him in jail.

For years he retained an almost wistful faith that Deng Xiaoping would come to understand the importance of democracy. But after the 1989 massacre of peaceful demonstrators in Tiananmen Square he could not contain his anger and, he senses, disappointment. "I've known that you were precisely the kind of idiot to do something like this," he wrote to Deng. "... you've long known that I am precisely the kind of idiot who will remain stubborn to the end."

Now Deng is dead, and his successors seem as fearful as ever of truth-tellers like Wei. "But what I am not clear on," Wei wrote of his imprisonment, "is how an ordinary person and an ignorant guy like myself, even if I were to scream out as loud as possible, could be such a nuisance to our leaders. Can they really be so afraid of letting people discuss politics?" It's still a good question.

Palestinians try to escape spiral of despair

Julian Borger reports from Ramallah on an economy desperate to evade Israel's squeeze

PALESTINIANS are anxiously searching for a way to make their economy shockproof. Concentrated in small, easily isolated enclaves, it has proved far more vulnerable than its Israeli counterpart to the crises which punctuate Middle Eastern politics.

The West Bank and Gaza Strip are only just beginning to recover from last year's "closures" imposed by the Israeli government in retaliation for a string of attacks. In February last year, after two bus bombings, the army sealed off the Palestinian autonomous regions and reduced the daily flow of Palestinian workers commuting to Israeli businesses from 70,000 to 15,000 overnight.

Trade in raw materials and finished goods was also squeezed to a trickle and the knock-on effects in the teeming refugee camps and Palestinian towns were severe.

In a recently-published report, the United Nations estimated that the unemployment rate increased from 19 per cent to nearly 30 per cent, and per capita GNP in the Palestinian territories dropped by more than 8 per cent. The average Palestinian wage fell by a tenth over the same period, from $411 per month to $370, sufficient to cover 64 per cent of basic family needs.

All the statistics reflect the fact that the Oslo peace process has so far been economically damaging for the Palestinians. By demarcating Palestinian territory, it has solidified the inter-ethnic boundaries and partially unhitched the Palestinians from the much stronger Israeli economy. Since 1993, their income as a group has shrunk by about a third. This year, however, economic analysts are being cautiously upbeat. Despite closures provoked by a March terrorist attack in Tel-Aviv, the Palestinian economy is showing signs of growth for the first time in more than five years.



Palestinian workers cross a border that could be closed at any moment

PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH

"If the political situation does not explode, 1997 looks like it will be a much better year than 1996," said Salem Ajluni, a UN economist working in Gaza. Some forecasts suggest a growth rate this year of 8 per cent.

A partial reason for the better performance is that the March closures were relatively shortlived. The average daily flow of Palestinian labourers into Israel has been 37,000 so far this year, compared with 22,000 last year.

But the vulnerability to external shocks remains. Despite large savings held by the Palestinian diaspora, there has been minimal investment in Gaza and the West Bank as a result of the chronic uncertainty.

"Private investment has contracted substantially since the Oslo process," said Ali Khadr, the deputy World Bank representative based in Ramallah, the West Bank's commercial hub. "A lot of the diaspora are out there waiting to come in, potentially in large-scale ventures. But they don't know what is going to happen in the next two years . . . what kind of government there's going to be, whether it will be part of Israel, or what kind of borders there are going to be."

Another cloud over investor confidence is the uncertain track record of Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority. The PA's hands were tied in terms of fiscal and trade policy by the economic annexe to the Oslo accords — which were designed to keep it in line with the Israeli economy. In the search for extra revenue Mr Arafat's entourage has involved itself deeply in trade, establishing monopolies in the import of petrol and construction materials.

"The character of these companies is not very transparent. There is certainly a need for further examination of the welfare loss involved," Mr Ali Khadr said.

There are several important developments currently being negotiated which have the potential to transform the investment climate. Under the Oslo accords, Gaza is to have its own airport and seaport, which could dramatically reduce Palestinian dependence on Israel.

Also in negotiation, and probably far closer to reality, is a World Bank and US-sponsored plan to build an industrial zone on the Gaza-Israel border, which would draw on Palestinian labour with Israeli supplies and markets.

The trade-off involved in the so-called Karni-Muntar Zone is that — in return for supervising its security — the Israelis would guarantee the zone would be "closure-proof".

Detailed negotiations on the Karni-Muntar Zone, the seaport and the airport have continued in recent weeks despite the freeze in the peace process. However, the Israeli government has yet to sign off on any of the three projects, perhaps for the same reason the Palestinian Authority is so eager to see them realised — they would make the Palestinians far less exposed to economic sanctions.

Britain stuck with a two-tier society

DEBATE
Paul Johnson

OF ALL the things that have changed since Britain's last Labour government in 1979, probably the most important has been the growth in the gap between the rich and the poor. A new book, Inequality In The UK, shows just how big these changes have been.

The growth in the gap between the rich and the poor is unprecedented in recent times. In the mid-1990s, the poorest 10 per cent of the population have incomes no higher than they did virtually two decades ago.

Over the same period, the income of the richest 10 per cent has grown by a half. The richest 10 per cent now control the same amount of income as the whole of the poorer half of the population — each has just over a quarter of total income. During the 1960s and 1970s, the poorer half had about a third of total income, the richest 10 per cent about a fifth. The shift in the distribution of income, and therefore in the balance of economic power, has been enormous.

It is not a question of the South pulling away from the North, or of the English getting richer than the Scots. In every region, in every age group, among pensioners just as among workers, inequality has risen.

By far the biggest underlying change has been in the earnings distribution. The highly skilled and highly educated now command vastly higher salaries than did their counterparts 20 years ago. The less skilled and more poorly educated are left to earn much the same salaries as their predecessors, or miss out on working altogether.

In fact, the picture is more complicated than that. The authors show that while the distribution of income and earnings has become much more unequal, the inequality in spending has risen much less quickly. While the poorest now have no more income than the poorest in the past, they spend rather more.

The rise in inequality is a complex issue that is hard to measure with certainty, but the central fact that inequality has spiralled upwards is not in dispute. And the main reasons for it lie in earnings and the labour market, and in the failure of social security benefits, including pensions, to keep up with earnings.

Given that tax and social security increases are off the political agenda, the Government is right to be concentrating on education, training and other welfare-to-work policies in an attempt to come to terms with the problem.

Does it matter? It doesn't look as if the poor are actually getting poorer, they are just falling behind everyone else. Well, clearly it matters when the Government comes to design tax and benefit policies, but it also has profound implications for other government policies. As some people's incomes have risen fast, so have their expectations. A basic state pension, a basic National Health Service, a basic level of state education are unlikely to satisfy a growing group who can afford to provide what they want for themselves.

And increasingly it looks as if public services are only going to be provided at a very basic level, as the Government continues to box itself into desperately tight spending plans. As the richer start to opt out, then we already have some evidence that they become less supportive of public spending and higher taxes.

So we end up in a vicious circle — higher incomes for some and low quality state provision leads to people taking the private option; as a result, they're unwilling to pay higher taxes; this leads to lower quality state services and then more opt out.

Additionally, once this process starts it can become much harder to argue that it should be reversed. Raising the basic pension for all now looks like poor value for money because many pensioners have substantial occupational pensions. One can imagine reaching a situation in which providing high-quality universal health care looks hard to defend because so many rich people can afford to provide their own.

Knowing what has happened to the distribution of people's living standards is vital because much government policy depends on it. But getting back to lower levels of inequality is likely to prove very hard.

Inequality in the UK, by Alissa Goodman, Paul Johnson and Steven Webb is published by Oxford University Press

In Brief

MALAYSIA'S prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad, has accused the US financier George Soros of being behind a sharp fall in the currencies of south-east Asian nations. Dr Mahathir believes Mr Soros is punishing Asean countries for admitting Burma as a member. Mr Soros denies the charge.

EUROPEAN UNION competition commissioner Karel Van Miert claimed victory in the stand-off with Boeing — and the US government — over the aerospace group's $14 billion merger with McDonnell Douglas. The commission gave its political blessing to the deal after Mr Van Miert obtained a last-minute concession from Boeing to drop exclusivity clauses with airlines.

LENDING by the UK's major banks surged by 13 per cent in June, providing new impetus for a further rise in interest rates. Meanwhile the strength of the pound has resulted in new export orders for small firms falling at their fastest rate for more than six years.

MEMBERS of Nationwide, the world's biggest building society, breathed new life into the mutual movement by voting against windfall payments of up to $3,200 each, bucking the recent trend to convert to banks. Meanwhile the Royal Bank of Scotland is expected to bid around $1 billion to take over Birmingham Midshires, Britain's fifth largest building society.

THE UK Serious Fraud Office has revealed that it will take no action over a $150 million trading loss uncovered four months ago at NatWest's City investment arm.

BAT Industries, the tobacco group, took time off from the rigours of US litigation over health claims to splash out $1.6 billion building a presence in Mexico.

ALMOST 3,000 workers at General Motors' car factory in Detroit went on strike over working conditions and alleged under-manning.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates July 28	Sterling rates July 21
Australia	2.2188-2.2217	2.2609-2.2649
Austria	21.19-21.21	21.19-21.21
Belgium	62.17-62.27	62.18-62.29
Canada	2.2646-2.2667	2.3054-2.3073
Denmark	11.46-11.47	11.47-11.48
France	10.15-10.16	10.17-10.17
Germany	3.0125-3.0163	3.0130-3.0154
Hong Kong	12.64-12.65	12.99-13.00
Ireland	1.1239-1.1266	1.1221-1.1241
Italy	2,930-2,935	2,930-2,934
Japan	192.09-192.34	194.20-194.48
Netherlands	3.3938-3.3968	3.3918-3.3947
New Zealand	2.5416-2.5452	2.5612-2.5642
Norway	12.44-12.46	12.44-12.46
Portugal	304.32-304.67	304.45-304.74
Spain	254.07-254.27	253.82-254.01
Sweden	12.97-12.99	13.04-13.06
Switzerland	2.4780-2.4812	2.4761-2.4782
USA	1.6336-1.6346	1.6776-1.6783
ECU	1.5238-1.5276	1.5252-1.5268

FTSE100 Share Index up 56.9 at 4862.6. FTSE 250 Index down 2.0 at 4461.2. Gold down $2.50 at $325.75.

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Wednesday, 20 August 1997



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MONITORING & RESEARCH DIRECTOR

Afghanaid has been giving humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people since 1983. With around 200 staff (mostly Afghan) and a budget of about £2 million, we have established a reputation as a well run and effective organisation. In the past we have concentrated on infrastructure and agricultural rehabilitation, but more recently have piloted a community development approach to help the poorest communities meet their basic needs in some of Afghanistan's most remote areas. Our new three year strategic plan envisages a major programme expansion, with an increasing focus on community development activities.

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For an information pack write to Marina Elmi, Afghanaid, 16 Mortimer Street, London, W1N 7RD, UK or fax +44 171-255 3344 (no phone calls please.) or email: AFGHANAID@aol.com

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Informal enquiries may be addressed to either Dr R Bradshaw, tel: 0115 951 5433, Email: Roy.Bradshaw@Nottingham.ac.uk or Professor N Manning, tel: 0115 951 5426, Email: Nick.Manning@Nottingham.ac.uk.

Please quote ref. SMM/170.
Closing date: 27 August 1997.

Application forms for both posts are available from the Personnel Office, Highfield House, The University of Nottingham, University Park, Nottingham NG7 2RD.
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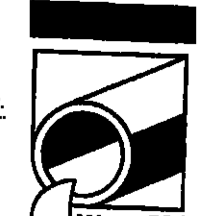
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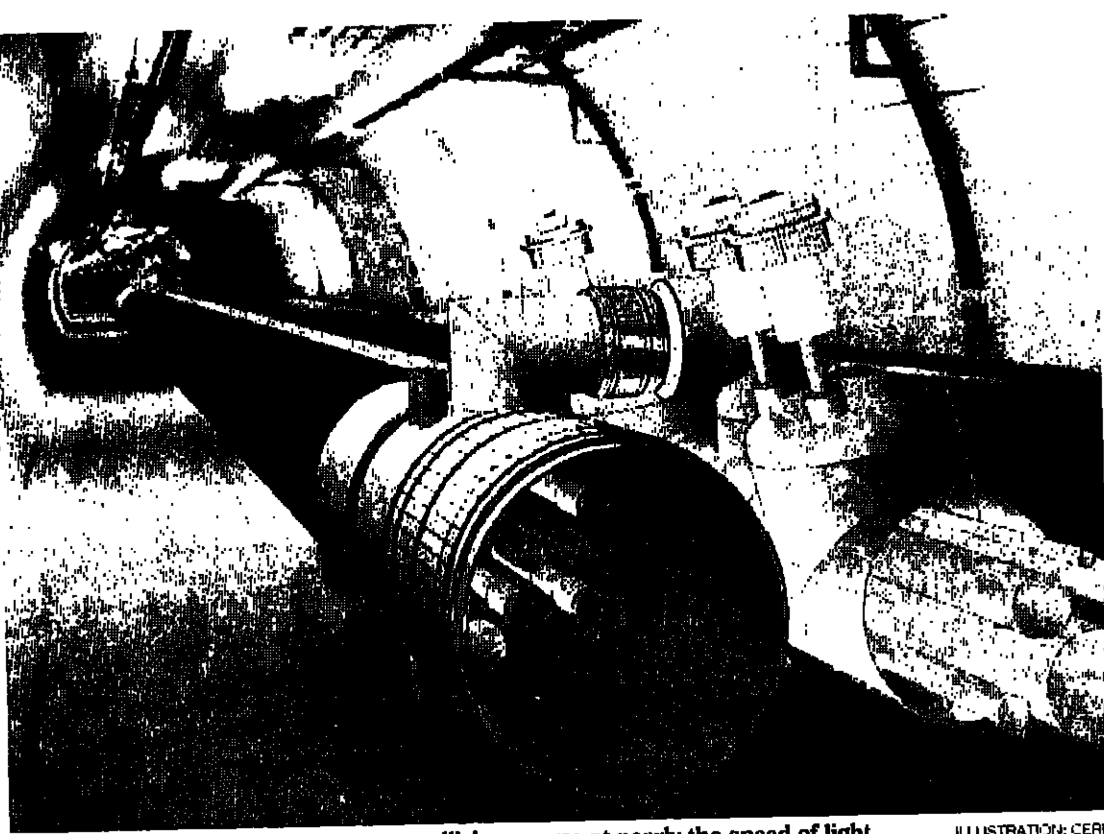




GUARDIAN WEEKLY
August 3 1997

The last gold rush of the millennium

Engineers are soon to bid to build the biggest machine in the world. **Tim Radford** reports



Tunnel vision: Protons will be set on a collision course at nearly the speed of light ILLUSTRATION: CERN

EUROPE is about to announce an engineering Klondike: a gold rush for construction contractors. The 19 European nations who are partners in Cern, the great accelerator 100 metres below the Jura mountains at Geneva, are about to announce contracts for a new machine called the Large Hadron Collider.

What the collider will do once it gets going in 2005 is enough to put an engineer into a cold sweat. It will consume 40 megawatts, the energy supply of a small country. It will take a hadron or proton — the hard, nubbly centre of a hydrogen atom — and wind it round and round Cern's existing 27km circular tunnel in one direction until it reaches a speed almost, but not quite, the speed of light. At the same time, it will spin another proton around the tunnel in the other direction. After a few hours, when the two of them are going as fast as they can go, the beam managers will arrange a head-on collision.

This will happen 800 million times a second.

As each proton acquires more energy, Einstein's famous $E=mc^2$ will come into play. The mass of each proton will increase. When they meet, the two will explode in a shower of fragments that will "weigh" far more than the two protons did when they went into the tunnel. The fragments will, everybody hopes, contain the secrets of matter, and give clues to what happened in the first billionth of a second of time, when the universe was about 10 million billion degrees hotter than it is now.

There will be antimatter, and quarks, and maybe the gluons that make quarks stick together. But one rare particle in the ghostly, fleeting shower of debris from millions upon millions of collisions, will be — everybody hopes — a thing called the Higgs boson.

A science minister once promised a bottle of vintage champagne to any scientist who could best explain, on a single sheet of paper, what a Higgs boson was. He paid out six bottles in the end. Matter is frozen energy, condensed light. The Higgs boson is what explains why condensed light has mass, why a brick is heavy as well as thick.

That's the theory. Theories are cheap. Proving them is expensive. That is why Ian Stagg, who describes himself as a Cern industry co-ordinator, labouring both for Britain's Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council and for the Department of Trade and Industry, was last week wandering around with sheets of paper which add up to 2.5 billion Swiss francs ($1.7 billion) worth of engineering contracts for work that began as thought experiments in the heads of Einstein and Lord Rutherford almost a century ago.

To put the big idea in another currency, the machine will cost $2.2 billion and the detectors another $840 million. And when the collider finds what it's looking for, not one person in a million will have a clue what it means.

The work is state of the art. Anybody who takes it on stretches technology and extends standards into a new dimension altogether. For instance, the protons — each 1,800 times smaller than a whole atom — have to be accelerated round a stainless-steel pipe in the middle of a tunnel hundreds of metres below the ground. The existing machine at Cern is so refined that engineers have to allow for the tug of the Moon: the gravitational pull of Earth's nearest neighbour not only causes a visible tide in the sea but it also causes one in the rocks. Only instruments like the Cern accelerator can detect it.

BUT THE pipe is only the start. The experiment has to be conducted in a vacuum. The vacuum is going to have to be to the ultimate standard: 10,000 times more evacuated than any vacuum so far on Earth. It is going to have to be as empty as the space between the planets. "Years and years ago," says Stagg, "there was this crazy notion that you could build a huge pipe from Earth into space and tap into the vacuum. But there is an easier way to do it."

The piping around the vacuum has to be perfect: molecules of air will leak through flaws, microcracks and defects in any crystalline structure. The pipes will be screwed together. But the scale of the operation creates new engineering problems: metal expands with changes in temperature, the very rocks that support it creep and flow with the Moon's pull. So someone has to provide a pumping system too. Stagg points out that when you buy a television set you expect the vacuum tube inside it to last the lifetime of the set: perhaps five years. "Your television tube is not 27km in circumference, it is about 27cm: we are talking about four orders of magnitude higher vacuum integrity, four times the lifetime of your TV tube and 10,000 times bigger."

There is another catch. The smaller the particle, the bigger, and the more sensitive, the machinery needed to accelerate it. So the protons will be thrown round the tunnel at more or less 186,000 miles a second by 8,000 superconducting magnets, some of them 16 metres long, each of which will have to be cooled to below minus 270C, slightly colder than the space between the stars.

So somebody has to supply 700,000 litres of liquid helium and eight 1,500 cubic metre stores to keep it in. Somebody has to provide 12 million litres of liquid nitrogen over a 15-day period just to cool the 31,000 tons of hardware down in the first place. Someone has to supply 40,000 leak-proof pipe junctions. There will be orders for more than 50,000 tons of hot-rolled and cold-rolled stainless steel, for thousands of kilometres of superconducting cable, for thousands of tons of high-strength aluminium alloy, for 6 million pairs of coil clamping collars, for 30,000 copper wedges and 60,000 wedge chips and tips.

The Cern engineers need ferrite blocks and magnet coils and magnet cores and ceramic beam pipes, vacuum vessels, capacitors, high-power diodes, and so on to make the "kicker" magnets that will kick protons round the loop. They will need injectors, power amplifiers, switch-mode converters and DC current transformers, fast switches, dump resistors and filter capacitors. There will be work for joiners, and pipe layers and water suppliers, and fire-proofers and some of the job is still anybody's guess: features like "beam cleaning" and "beam abort system" are marked: "To be defined later".

The prospectus should have ambitious businesses salivating. This work is showcase stuff, guaranteed by international agreement. No single nation could possibly do what Cern has embarked on.

Cern is the biggest game in town and most players have never heard of it. That's why Stagg is marching around with a briefcase full of material, trying to spread the word. The 2,000 engineers and managers at Cern have to provide a machine to feed the appetite for data of more than 6,000 physicists around the world. But the entire operation will be pursuing a kind of particle needle in a haystack as big as the Alps. The research is frontier stuff: so is the engineering. The detectors will count in nanoseconds: in billionths of a second. Because the sought-after bosons will peel off at very precise angles from any collision, the detectors — bigger than some office blocks — have to be placed to within thousandths of a millimetre. Precision science requires precision hardware.

It is, says Stagg, the last gold rush this millennium. But not everyone is up to the challenge. "If you are not in the business of using superlatives on a regular basis," he says "this is probably not for you."

Cern is at *www.cern.ch/* Ian Stagg is at *Ian_Stagg@pparc.ac.uk*

Caught in the sticky trap of bureaucracy

LOS ANGELES DIARY
Christopher Reed

RECENTLY I volunteered to help teach the youthful hard cases at my local youth detention centre how to write a sentence, rather than serving one. But the centre wanted a background check so intrusive I withdrew my offer.

My experience was not exceptional. Applicants for even the humblest jobs are now routinely subjected to outrageous infringements of their privacy rights, which are enshrined in the US constitution's fourth amendment. My reaction came from the knowledge of how easily personal information can be misused.

The county probation department's form asked me to authorise officers to "obtain any information in your files pertaining to employment, credit or educational records, including, but not limited to, academic achievement, attendance, athletic, personal history, performance report, background investigations, polygraph examination results, any and all internal affairs investigations and disciplinary records, credit records, and criminal justice records/reports, eg, arrests, detentions, field citations and interviews, officer records, jail/custody booking records, traffic citations and accident reports, probation/ parole reports and any other information."

They wanted permission to release any information to nameless "third parties"; and, of 29 personal questions, only three related to being a volunteer. Who did they think was on probation? I was lucky not to be fingerprinted as well; it has become commonplace.

This year the FBI expects 14 million fingerprints to be checked against their archives, up 3 million on last year. Candidates who must submit include teachers, bank customers, driving licence and credit card applicants, lottery employees, child minders, school janitors, nursing home workers and anyone entering a high security building.

Prints are a must for foreigners seeking citizenship of the "sweet land of liberty". In the case of Pushp Grover, an Indian-born clerk who has lived in the US since 1970 with no more on her record than a $10 speeding ticket, it has been a trial of loyalty. She has been fingerprinted 11 times and each time they came out blurred, but the computer — and the bureaucrats who control it — keeps rejecting her application. Has she not thought of adopting another country?

The authorities argue that the honest have nothing to fear. This is not true, partly because the entire security industry is incompetent, and the information falls into the wrong hands. Stories proliferate of people losing their identities to predators. By giving away only their name and social security number citizens have found themselves being impersonated by a thief.

One woman recently found that she had acquired a new $22,000 Jeep, five credit cards, and a $3,000 loan. Nice, except that she had ordered none and couldn't afford them. Another woman, using information lifted from personal questions on her job application form, had stolen her identity. It took months to regain her identity and shed the unwanted debts.

California's senator Dianne Feinstein is seeking legislation to curb ID thefts. To test the validity of her complaint, a Newsweek reporter called search firms via the Internet. All he began with was Ms Feinstein's name, but for less than $100, he soon had her social security number, her ex-directory telephone number, her addresses at all five homes, her credit report, details of her ... and her bank statements.

The authorities know they are snooping, because they are ashamed. They avoid the phrase fingerprinting and use ludicrous euphemisms. One bank that requires thumb prints from non-customers seeking to cash a cheque calls it their "Thumbs Up Identification Program". Phooey. I say thumbs down to the whole authoritarian, snide, nosy, emerging police state.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
August 3 1997

Fifty years ago, Britain sliced up the Raj along religious lines. For some, the pain of partition lives on. **Suzanne Goldenberg** reports

The day India's heart was broken

Thousands died in the 1946 Calcutta riots, before the partition of Bengal PHOTOGRAPH: ...

HALF a century ago, India and Pakistan won freedom from British rule, and millions of people lost their homes and their past, severed from a history shared by Hindu, Muslim and Sikh. It was the biggest population exchange in modern history. The migrants left behind a million dead, and memories so horrific, so stained in blood, they haunted their children — and their children's children.

Neighbour turned on neighbour, men slit the throats of their wives and children to save them from rape or enslavement. Those who did manage the journey relatively unscathed had usually gathered just a few belongings — they planned to come back for the rest when things returned to normal. But virtually none were to return.

They weren't to know it, but their fate was decreed on July 15, 1947, when the British House of Commons voted to create two independent dominions, to be called India and Pakistan, in what had previously been the territory of the Raj.

Sir Cyril Radcliffe, a barrister who had never even visited India, was appointed to head a boundary commission. That commission was charged with dividing all the assets of the Raj — in just five weeks — according to a formula based on demographics. Hindu India would inherit 82.5 per cent of the territory, while 17.5 per cent would become Pakistan, envisaged as a new homeland for Muslims.

The immediate explanation for that division along religious lines was the failure of the Indian National Congress, the freedom movement led by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, to assure Muslims that they too would enjoy a stake in the emerging India. The fault line was an old demand for separate electorates by the Muslim League, which was later espoused by the League's leader, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, founding father of Pakistan. Congress opposed separate electorates; Jinnah decided the only option was a separate Pakistan.

Not that Britain escaped blame. Indian historians have accused the colonial rulers of sowing the seeds of division by introducing separate electorates in Bengal in 1909, treating Hindus and Muslims, for the first time, as separate entities.

By 1945, the rift between the League and the Congress seemed irreparable. India slid toward civil war. On August 9, 1946, 5,000 people were killed in Calcutta during a Direct Action day called by the Muslim League. By March 1947, the killing had spread to Punjab, fanned by the demands of Sikhs for a state of their own.

The bloodshed unleashed after the failure of Hindu and Muslim leaders to compromise — and by the British impatience to reach a constitutional settlement for a transfer of power — was already well under way when Louis Mountbatten arrived in India in March 1947 as the last viceroy.

Mountbatten oversaw a final attempt to reconcile the Muslim League and the Congress. That failed too, and on June 3 it was decided that partition was inevitable.

There were no obvious geographic boundaries, however, and the map that Sir Cyril drew created a Pakistan that hovered on either side of India like a pair of wings. His pen sliced through the burning plains of Punjab and the lush paddy fields of Bengal, whose eastern wing broke away from Pakistan in 1971 to form independent Bangladesh.

The result of the map-making exercise, which became known only on August 14, was a nightmare. A civilisation was sacrificed to a bizarre sense of order: so much for India, so much for Pakistan, right down to government tables, chairs and ink pots.

For the millions of people who discovered themselves on the wrong side of the line, it was a living hell. At the stroke of midnight, they were exiled forever, driven from their ancestral homes because of an accident of birth. For some unfortunates, such as the people who tell their stories below, the partition was re-enacted over and over again in a search for identity — and for relatives.

Kartar Kaur

In the villages of Punjab, the demons destroyed a way of life that was based on tolerance and peace, and the glossing over of deep inequalities beneath a placid surface. Nobody questioned why Hindus and Sikhs were traders and landowners and, by and large, well-off. It was just that that was the way it had always been, remembers Kartar Kaur.

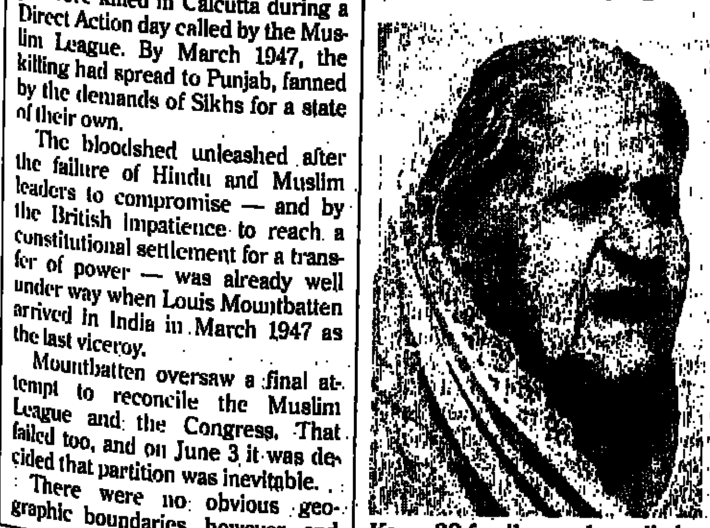
Now a matriarch whose slow shuffle is a gift of arthritis and age, she moves between the houses in a neighbourhood of Patiala, in India's Punjab, as if each were her own. It was not so in her village of Ghug, which lies in Pakistan's Jhelum district, where the pecking order was firmly rooted in religion.

The Sikhs owned the land, and the Muslims worked the fields, a relationship that endured because of mutual need. Though the communities marked each other's festivals as a sign of respect, no Sikh would eat food cooked in a Muslim house. Their position was so assured, they could ignore the fact they were a minority in the village.

But that world fell apart in March 1947, five months before partition after a Sikh leader tore up the new flag of Pakistan in Lahore. When their Muslim field hands warned them that an attack was imminent, the Sikhs took a vow to fight to the death.

Outnumbered on a spring afternoon, at least 90 men were killed in the Sikhs' last stand. Kartar Kaur lost 32 members of her family, including her son, aged nine. When their attackers withdrew, she wandered in a daze towards the village well. Forgetting for a moment the two small daughters who were spared with her, she was going to jump in and drown herself. But the well was already full of the corpses of the young women who had gone before her.

A Muslim neighbour dragged her back from the brink and sheltered her in his own home. Here Kaur's vivid recall of events deserts her — 50 years on, her shame at taking refuge in the house of a Muslim lingers still.





Kaur: 32 family members died

Hajji Abdul Hanan

Hajji Abdul Hanan, born so long ago he treats the question of age with bemusement, never had any doubts about where his home was: the ancient alleys of Delhi. "I like these lanes. Whether I am poor or rich, these lanes are mine. I grew up here, I worked here, my mother and father are buried here. That Pakistan is an alien place."

Like much of Delhi at the time, Hanan's section of the city was a mainly Muslim neighbourhood. When partition came Hindus and Sikhs, driven from their homes in what had become Pakistan, arrived unhinged by grief and a hunger for revenge.

"People who wanted to come here were getting slaughtered," says Hanan, "and those who wanted to leave were getting slaughtered."

During a lull in the violence that spread across old Delhi, Hanan left his leather workshop to help clear bodies from the road. "These people had knives attached to bamboo staves and they attacked me," he says. "Someone cut my nose with a sword so it was hanging loose."

Most of Hanan's Muslim neighbours departed for the old Mughal forts, heritage sites turned refugee camps, and then onwards to Pakistan. Hanan never regretted his decision to stay, but still a part of his birthright was stolen from him. Two of his 12 children have married Pakistanis, and most of his family migrated.

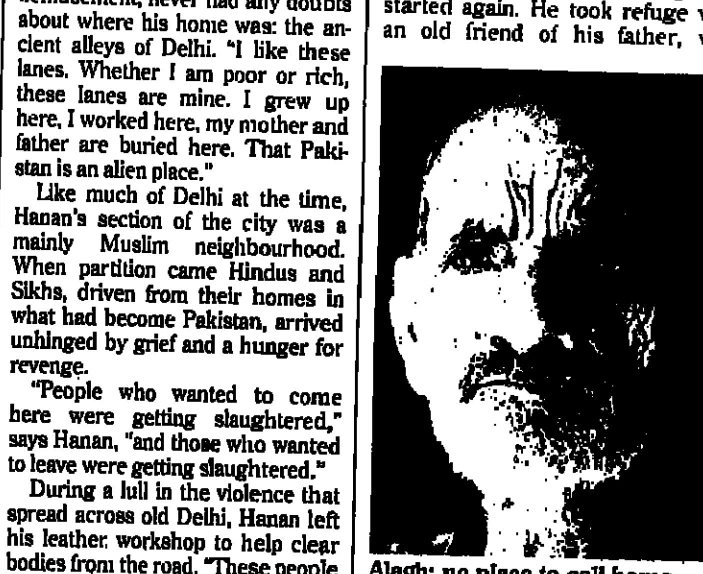
Hanan lives in another area of old Delhi now, one that is regularly convulsed by Hindu-Muslim riots. "We became absolute enemies. Whenever there is a riot, people turn into demons," he says. "People go out of control in three minutes, but it takes a long time to get back to normal."

Nanak Chand Alagh

In February 1948, long after the refugee trains, their human cargo crying out for water and air from windows obscured by bodies and luggage, crawled slowly across Punjab, Nanak Chand Alagh decided to go home. A Hindu, his homing instinct defied all the prevailing logic: the village of his birth was now in Pakistan, near Peshawar.

Alagh, a doctor serving with the Army Medical Corps in Iraq, ignored the warnings of fellow Hindu officers, all of whom opted for India. On demobilisation he arranged for transport to his village of Hassan Abdal to look for his family. Their home was deserted, as were all Hindu homes, and Alagh soon realised he was no longer welcome.

A few days after his arrival there were rumours that the killings had started again. He took refuge with an old friend of his father, who



Alagh: no place to call home

promised to look after him like a son so long as he adopted Islam. Nanak Chand Alagh became Sheikh Abdullah ul-Qadri.

"I didn't have any faith in Islam but for the sake of my life I converted myself." He married his saviour's daughter and they had two sons. With his father-in-law's help he set up up a small hospital.

But the village of Hassan Abdal no longer felt like home. He located his sisters in New Delhi. He came on a visit and decided to stay, abandoning his wife and children and his Pakistani existence.

New Delhi wasn't home either. The authorities refused to make him an Indian citizen and when war broke out with Pakistan in 1971 he was imprisoned as an enemy agent. He was set loose at the border, wandering for three days in the desert before he was again arrested, this time by Pakistani border police. Alagh spent the next eight years in a Lahore jail as an Indian spy before he was pushed across the frontier again.

By the time of his return to India, he had forgotten everything he knew as a doctor and found a welcome only among other outcasts. Now aged 85, Alagh has a threadbare existence as the caretaker of a Dalit (formerly untouchable) temple in the town of Patiala on the Indian side of Punjab.

Milkha Singh

But these are not the stories that modern India likes to tell itself. For if partition left a sense of overwhelming loss, its pain has been blunted by the material success that followed. Most of the migrants from Bengal, Sind and Punjab disdained the label "refugee", taking pride instead in their determination to rebuild their lives.

Among them, few had so spectacular a rise as Milkha Singh, aged 65, who was born to a Sikh family in the village of Gobindpura which ended up in Pakistan. Only eight of his parents' 13 children survived beyond infancy, and Milkha was so poor he used to go barefoot to school. "The sand was so hot, I used to run for a patch of grass and stand there for a minute. The soles of my feet were as hard as a rock."

On August 15, 1947, the Muslims of the village, who were more numerous, demanded their neighbours convert or die. The Sikh villagers gathered in the temple and the teenage Milkha ran for help. By the time he returned, with an elder brother who was serving in the army, everyone was dead.

He took a train to India, where he lived at New Delhi railway station. "There were bodies lying on the tracks and at the roadside on the way, and at the station there was plague."

He was accepted into the army engineering corps, turning up for his first roll call as prizes were being handed out for an athletics competition. Milkha was entranced — in the village there was no notion of sport — and he started to run, secretly at first, and still barefoot.

His talent was soon recognised. In 1956 he was part of the team for the Melbourne Olympics. He was the first Indian to take a gold in athletics at the Commonwealth games, and in 1960 narrowly missed a bronze in the Rome Olympics.

Why do we live in terror?

Don't look now but the media is full of stories to make every parent shiver and to send us running to our doctors. **Frank Furedi** has had enough of this fear that eats our souls. Life is to be lived. And it doesn't bite

IT WAS only a matter of time before someone raised the spectre of some environmental peril posed by the construction of the Millennium Dome in south London. Warnings of impending disasters are now routinely made in relation to almost every proposed development. So when Greenpeace warned that the Millennium Dome will be poisonous and threatened to disrupt its construction, it was giving yet another expression to society's addiction to fear.

The transformation of the New Millennium Experience into a threat to the safety of the people of Greenwich follows a predictable pattern. We seem incapable of embracing innovation or new experience without recasting it as a risk.

The fear of risk feeds on itself. And safety has become the fundamental value of the nervous nineties. Hardly a week goes by without some new danger to the individual being reported, and another safety measure proposed.

A flick through last week's headlines makes the point: "Green dome threat," screams the Mirror; "Hormone linked to breast cancer," booms the Times; "Don't send your children to Oxford, it is not a safe place," cautions the daily Telegraph. Even the daily Guardian is hooked on fear. "Nannies danger to children," it warned.

A wide network of charities and organisations has grown up offering advice on all aspects of personal safety. The trend, most clearly expressed through the institutionalisation of the helpline phenomenon, has made a major impact on contemporary culture.

"What are the risks?" and "what are the side effects?" are questions posed to an ever-expanding list of subjects. Such concerns are not merely expressed in relation to the high-profile dangers — BSE, nuclear radiation, potential environmental catastrophes. Every new product, from the mobile phone to computer games, is invariably put through an anxious calculus of risk. There is a compulsion to anticipate and pre-empt adverse outcomes.

The "what if" question has led experts to speculate about the special danger of abuse faced by children conceived by in vitro fertilisation (IVF). The absence of any factual evidence has failed to inhibit this search for the worst-case scenario. Reports have suggested that some potential parents are allowed to go forward for IVF treatment without assessing whether they could turn into abusers of their children.

In a similar vein, the Internet has been represented as a potential site for major calamities. There has been much press comment about so-called "cyber-terrorism" and the threat to society's moral well-being from pornography and paedophile rings. There is even a self-help group called Caught in the Net for those suffering from "Internet Addiction Syndrome".

Once a preoccupation with safety has been made routine and banal, no area of human endeavour can be immune from its influence. Activities that were hitherto seen as healthy and fun — such as enjoying the sun — are now declared to be major health risks. Moreover even activities that have been pursued precisely because they contain an element of danger are now reinterpreted from the perspective of safety consciousness. Pressure groups are demanding that new safety measures should be introduced in mountain-climbing.

No human experience is immune from fear. We fear that the lottery will turn Britain into a nation of gambling addicts. Fear drives parents to spy on their children's nannies. We fear that our children will be kidnapped by strangers. We are anxious about bullies in schools and in the workplace.

Every bit of public space is saturated by fear. Security has become a major concern in hospitals, schools, universities and doctors' surgeries. In our cars we fear road rage. And even in the privacy of our homes we fear violent men and out-of-control mothers.

Research shows that although anxieties about risk are often disproportionate to the real dangers facing us, they can have a major impact on the way we conduct our lives. Probably it is the smaller, routine mini-panics — not the sensational outburst of publicity about flesh-eating bugs — which have most influenced changes in our lifestyles.

Every parent of a young infant is plagued by the fear that cot death or Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) might strike down their child. High-profile campaigns publicising the syndrome have ensured that the British public is highly sensitive — sensitised even — to this affliction.

Concern about cot death is a frequent topic of discussion among new parents. New mothers in particular often reveal a sense of powerlessness when confronted by the threat to their baby. And yet cot death is very rare. Even though the syndrome is ill-defined and is used to explain any infant death for which there is no reliable explanation, on average fewer than 400 babies die from it out of the 688,000 live births every year.

The culture of fear is a defining feature of modern Britain — and it particularly affects the young

A report published by Families For Freedom argues that it is "ironic that the concern about SIDS has arisen in the context of an overall decline in infant mortality". During the past two decades the number of infant deaths in Britain halved from 12 to 6.2 per 1,000 live births. And yet alarm about the health of babies is rising steadily, with doctors claiming that parents are becoming more and more anxious about the well-being of their children.

Panics about health risks have had a disproportionate impact on the quality of life of women. Toxic shock syndrome (TSS) provides a classic example of how a statistically insignificant condition was turned into a major scare campaign which has affected the lives of millions of women. Public concern about TSS has led to significant changes in women's buying habits.

TSS was linked to tampons after a number of cases in the United States occurred in women using high-absorbency tampons — and it remains the case that tampon users seem to be particularly prone. Yet nobody has established what the link is. Research in this area does not suggest a causal relation.

Even pressure groups devoted to raising awareness about this condition concede that about half the reported cases have nothing to do with menstruation at all. Infections after surgery are a common cause, as are burns and gardening injuries. Some women who are stricken with TSS are not even tampon users.

Not only is the relationship between TSS and tampons far from clear; this highly publicised disease is exceptionally rare. According to the UK Public Health Laboratory Service, there were only 162 reported cases of TSS in the eight years up to 1993. Of these, just over 50 per cent were related to menstruation.

When one considers that there are about 14 million tampon-using menstruating women, the chances of getting TSS from using a tampon this year is one in 700,000. If you are one of the unlucky few, a further comfort should be that the illness is curable. There were seven menstrual-related deaths from TSS between 1985 and 1993; an average of less than one a year.

Tampons, which were once a symbol of freedom for women, have become stigmatised as a health hazard. Apprehensions about using them are particularly strong among young women — an increasing proportion of whom are likely to favour sanitary towels as a more "natural" option.

A similar pattern is evident in young women's reaction to the oral contraceptive pill. In the sixties and seventies the pill was associated with women's liberation. Yet today, following recent panics about the pill's safety, women's magazines in Britain seem obsessed with its drawbacks rather than its advantages. The Birth Control Trust claims that since 1993 the use of the pill among women in their 20s — the age when they are most likely to have an unwanted pregnancy — has fallen by 10 per cent.

Sixty per cent of women who change from the pill to a barrier method are motivated by concern about health risks; yet the modern pill is safer than ever. Today's commonly used brands contain a fraction of the hormones used by women who took the pill in the seventies. Women's health is far more likely to suffer from unwanted pregnancy than from taking the pill.

The culture of fear has had a particularly significant impact on women. But as the growing popularity of men's health magazines indicates, it has not left masculinity untouched. Take the spate of reports which suggested that the sperm count of British men was falling due to some unspecified pollutants. The evidence was far from conclusive, yet society appears to have been disposed to leap to the worst possible interpretation. In contrast, a report published in February which questioned the doom thesis and contended that "overall, sperm counts have been on the rise since 1971" was barely discussed in the media.

So why has this inflated sense of danger come about? Any attempt at an explanation must inevitably be schematic. But one factor at play could be a collective striving to make sense of the uncertainty created by fundamental changes in human relations. The weakening of traditional forms of solidarity — family and class — has been widely commented on. The consequence of this process has been an intense individuation of everyday life, forcing people into situations where little can be taken for granted.

In a world ever more devoid of certainty, hitherto unexceptional encounters are increasingly perceived as risky, even dangerous. It is a world of strangers, where safety takes on a special meaning and where fear acquires a dynamic of its own.

Commercial factors may also be operating. There can be little doubt that the culture of fear has been seized upon by astute entrepreneurs. Products and services that are linked to risk avoidance are doing well. In the UK, bottled water has been the fastest growth sector in the drinks market while the personal security and safety industries are booming.

Products are often marketed not for what they do but for the security they offer. So car phones are sold as safety devices to protect women who fear violent attacks driving home. Not to mention the insurance industry which has been quick to offer a variety of new policies against an expanding range of risks from redundancy at work to a bewildering variety of possible accidents.

The culture of fear is a defining feature of modern Britain — and it particularly affects the young. This is not surprising since those who grew up in the eighties have been systematically exposed to the contemporary obsession with risks.

That is why young women are particularly prone to panics of the pill and TSS variety. It may also help to explain why a growing proportion of young men, aged 18-24, is opting to stay at home and live with their families, and why university graduates looking for their first job are so keen to ask probing questions about company pensions.

It all sounds very sensible. But if young people, traditionally the most adventurous section of the population, become more and more reluctant to take chances, what future is there for society?

Of course human beings, and especially the young, will continue to live on the edge. The sadness is that we are creating a world where experimentation has become stigmatised; it no longer conveys a sense of adventure or heroism. Increasingly, those who chance their luck stand morally condemned for putting others at risk. Instead of the hero we worship the survivor. And a society that celebrates its ability to survive has little to offer to those who actually want to live.

Frank Furedi teaches sociology at the University of Kent. His book, Culture of Fear: Risk Taking and the Morality of Low Expectation, has just been published by Cassell

ILLUSTRATION: DANIEL PUDLES

Letter from Northern Greece Daryl Tayar

Boom town's heat and dust

LAST summer the geraniums died because of the yellow dust that fell each night. This is Ptolemaida, which was a typical Macedonian Greek village of mud-brick houses with vegetable plots and chickens until 1960, when the first lignite mines and power stations were opened. Today they produce 75 per cent of Greece's electricity, and Ptolemaida has a population of 50,000. It's a boom town, hot and dirty, rich and nervous, with more cars per head than any other city apart from New York.

This year Patricia has had bronchitis twice, laryngitis, and then finally full-blown pneumonia. Thankfully Andreas Papandreou's legacy of national health insurance has saved us. Prescriptions are much cheaper than in Britain and the doctors mostly excellent, as long as you avoid the state dentist, whose surgery floor is edged with dead cockroaches. I saw him to get an opinion on a broken tooth, but when I returned for the work to be done, the smell of shit at the door and the brutal sounds from within were too much. I dumped my principles and departed for the private sector.

We are 150km from Albania. Some houses are faced with grey stone in a traditional Balkan style but three currently going up on our little street alone are four- or five-storeyed concrete apartment blocks. This means that a large population lives in a relatively small area. The sense of small town intimacy is enhanced by the continuing presence of family shops — the butchers, the fishmongers, the many cheese shops, the wine shops and the unbelievable number of patisseries, ornate to the point of tackiness.

A high proportion of Ptolemaidons are children of the Greek communities who came from Pontos, Istanbul and Eastern Thrace in 1923, when more than 1,300,000 Greek refugees arrived as part of the population exchange between Turkey and Greece.

These people came with little more than what they stood up in and today combine pride in their distinctive culture with some awkwardness at being, so to speak, country cousins. Many still dream that one day they will regain the vast areas of Turkey that they consider to be historically Greek, including Istanbul, which they, of course, call Constantinople.

In class, my students' hatred for the Turks is shocking, and their chauvinism runs from bewilderment as to why Greek is not the official language of the European Union, to the firm belief that English and indeed every other European language is but a small and barbaric descendant of Greek.

Despite the pollution, the complete absence of trees on the pot-holed streets and the ridiculous traffic congestion, the students still write essays describing Ptolemaida as a beautiful place. One poor lad, however, having dwelt on his love of fishing and his dream of walking in meadows full of wild flowers, ended his composition by writing: "The sea is missing me."

One thing the town is not short of, with all the overtime at the power stations, is money. While the rest of Greece struggles to cope with prices that have skyrocketed since entry into the EU, in Ptolemaida they struggle only to find ways to spend money. Every night the Harley Davisons throb up and down the tight alleys that are lined with neon bars and thronged with teenagers drinking cocktails or Scotch. Families spend and spend on interior decoration. Baroque chandeliers and walnut bureaux are commonplace. No one seems to care about the litter and the rats on the streets. The environment is just a place to throw your rubbish.

Nine in the evening. A ring at the door. It is Lazarus the milkman, an ex-construction worker with initiative and nine cows. We could no longer bear to drink milk that came from conventionally kept cows, which are permanently pregnant, whose calves are routinely taken off them and of whom a sizeable percentage have mastitis. Just now our milk comes from Morphoula — we get second pull after her calf has drunk its fill.

Monkey business as a science

Robin McKie

PEERING into the eyes of a pygmy chimpanzee may reveal a strange secret: a glimpse of our ancient apeman ancestors.

Scientists now believe these graceful cousins of the common chimpanzee share many features with australopithecines, a four-million-year-old forebear of *Homo sapiens*.

According to Professor Frans de Waal of the Yerkes Regional Primate Centre in Atlanta, the pygmy chimpanzee, or bonobo, is probably the best model we have of "the so-called missing link". But as he stresses in Bonobo: The Forgotten Ape (published by the University of California), this does not mean bonobos are the missing link. He and fellow researchers merely argue that bonobos resemble more closely the type of creature from which we evolved than any other living animal.

As a result, when we look at these creatures, we see features that have changed only slightly over the past six million years: diminutive stature, long arms and small brains.

It is believed that humans and apes shared an ancestor about six million years ago. Then the two lines evolved in different directions until, three million years ago, the ape line split in two. One led to the chimpanzee; the other to a slightly smaller, more graceful type of ape: the bonobo.

But until recently little was known about the bonobo, and most comparisons between our behaviour and that of the apes concentrated on similarities between chimps and humans. As a result, it was assumed that male-dominated, fairly violent societies are the norm. Recent work on the bonobo challenges this assumption, however.

"Had bonobos been known earlier, reconstruction of human evolution might have emphasised sexual relations, equality between males and females and the origin of the family, instead of war, hunting, tool technology and other masculine fortes," says Prof de Waal.

Ignorance about the bonobo stems from the fact that they were only classified in 1929, and that there are only about 10,000 of the species, all living in a small fragment of forest in the Democratic People's Republic of Congo.



Bonobos, undiscovered until 1929, live in harmony in a society that emphasises sexual relations and equality PHOTO PLANET EARTH PICTURES

However, when bonobos were studied by scientists, they produced a distinct shock, for the creatures were found to have staggering sexual appetites. As Prof de Waal puts it: "Bonobos engage in sex in virtually every partner combination."

These "combinations" include penis-fencing — in which two males hang face to face from a branch while rubbing their erect penises together — as well as sporadic oral sex, massage of another individual's genitals and intense tongue-kissing. On the other hand, it should be added that the average copulation lasts only 13 seconds.

This behaviour has a basic ulterior — but unconscious — motive. Sex is used as a substitute for aggression, as a means of defusing tension. For example, after a female hits a juvenile, the latter's mother may lunge at the aggressor, an action immediately followed by genital rubbing between the two adults.

And in this non-violent society, freed from the fear of male aggression, females control food and dominate the males. "Bonobos provide a concrete alternative to macho evolutionary models derived from the behaviour of baboons and chimpanzees," adds Prof de Waal. "They also thoroughly upset the idea that sex is solely for procreation."

However, similarities that we have with bonobos, or for that matter chimps, are not sufficient on their own to explain every aspect of human evolution, Prof de Waal acknowledges. Special factors have produced unique human characteristics, particularly the nuclear family in which males and females share the raising of offspring — a phenomenon unique in the ape world.

Nevertheless, non-aggressive bonobos, with their powerful female lobby and egalitarian social structure, provide as useful a model for understanding human evolution as any other species, particularly as it is based on an animal with whom we share 98 per cent of our genetic make-up. — *The Observer*

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

WHAT FOLLOWS gold and diamond wedding anniversaries? If nothing, can anyone suggest a suitable substance for our parents' 70th?

WHEN my uncle and aunt celebrated their platinum wedding (70 years), I gave them a platinum-coloured orchid. — *Ann Wilks, Whitstable, Kent*

WHY DO multiplication tables end at 12?

THE MAIN reason is that they come from an age of inches and feet, pence and shillings, when the 12-times table was widely useful. The current GCSE syllabus states that pupils only need to know up to their 10 times table. — *Gerard Mackay, Shropshire*

WHAT is the origin of the phrase "doesn't cut the mustard"?

IN THE ninth century, when mustard was one of the main crops in East Anglia, it was cut by hand with scythes, in the same way as corn. The crop could grow up to six feet high and this was very arduous work, requiring extremely sharp tools. When blunt they "would not cut the mustard". All this and everything else you could ever want to know about mustard can be found at the Mustard Museum in Norwich. — *Phil Pegum, Stretton, Cheshire*

EARLY 20th century criminal slang to describe a well performing person or gang was to say they were "hot stuff" or "mustard". So a person who doesn't cut the mustard is second rate. — *Peter Sharp, Snells Beach, New Zealand*

WHY does the wedding ring go on the third finger of the left hand? I am left-handed: is it socially acceptable to have the wedding band on my right hand?

HISTORY has labelled left-handedness as an evil trait. The present-day wedding tradition of joining right hands and placing the gold ring on the third finger of the left hand began with the superstition that doing so would absorb the evil inherent in the left hand. So if you are evil wear the ring on your left hand, if not place it on your right. — *Martyn Davies, Truckee, California, USA*

IF DOGS can understand certain words like their name and "sit", how many words could they learn? Is it a matter of conditioning? Could certain breeds understand more than others?

OUR miniature schnauzer, who lived to be 16 before being killed by a hit-and-run driver while he (the dog, not as far as we know, the driver) was on a tour of the homes of his favourite bitches, was actually bilingual and would respond to (or ignore according to mood) a wide range of words in both English and Swiss German. — *B Locher, Huettikon, Switzerland*

DOGS do not understand any human language. Why should they? They usually know before you do that you are about to wake up in the morning or go for a brisk walk. Dogs are not confused by language, but familiar gestures or oral sounds can be helpful because they stress what is usually obvious to the dog anyway. Humans with habitual behaviour are like an open book to an intelligent animal. Dogs that seem to understand language are just eager to please. — *Bob Norlin, Kew, Victoria, Australia*

Any answers?

WE INHERIT genetic characteristics from our parents. Which from our father and which from our mother, and which, if any, from both? — ***Donald MacBeath, Edinburgh***

WHO is the world's greatest hypocrite? — ***Terry James, Reddish, Stockport***

WHAT are the chances of the Year-2000 computer-date problem causing worldwide economic meltdown? — ***John Coatman, Rugeley, Staffordshire***

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

Resurrection of a fading old master

Ian Phillips on an art historical detective story

NINETEEN seventy-nine was the year Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister, the year that Soviet troops entered Afghanistan and the year the Camp David peace agreement was signed. For most people, it probably seems like a distant memory, but Milanese art restorer Pinin Brombilla Barcilon remembers it well. It was the year she began restoring Leonardo da Vinci's The Last Supper, and she's still doing it.

At that time, she was working on the Crucifixion by Montorfano, which faces Leonardo's masterpiece in the refectory of Santa Maria delle Grazie church in Milan. One day, she noticed bits of paint falling from The Last Supper and moved her scaffolding to take a look. Experts from Rome's Central Restoration Institute were then called in, and the decision to restore the painting was swiftly taken.

Now she directs a team of three, and together they manage to restore one square centimetre a day. They are hoping to complete the restoration next year: it will have taken 19 years.

The refectory has been open to the public since 1995, when a new air-conditioning system was installed, and visitors now pass through a series of four pressurised, filtered, glass chambers that keep temperature and humidity stable and reduce dust. Each person is allowed 20 minutes in front of the painting, but this is long enough to watch the restorers at work on a huge hydraulic platform.

Restoring The Last Supper is something very special to Brombilla Barcilon. "It's very difficult for a restorer to have the opportunity to work on one of Leonardo's paintings. It's something that happens just once in a lifetime."

Before the restoration work proper could begin, the Brussels Restoration Institute looked into which solvents would be most suitable to remove excess paint and centuries of dirt. Chemical and physical tests were carried out on minuscule particles of colour. In her sparse office are file upon file of microscope photos, and it was discovered that large amounts of oil, glue and putty had been added to the painting by restorers in the past. Thousands of black-and-white, colour, infrared and ultra-violet photos were taken, and the work was carefully reconstituted on computer to show its exact state before the present restoration.



Brombilla Barcilon: 'When the scaffolding is dismantled that will be that . . . I will have lost everything'

The Last Supper was commissioned by the Duke of Milan, Lodovico Il Moro, in 1495, and depicts the moment at which Christ tells his disciples that one of them will betray him. It took Leonardo three years to complete; given one eyewitness's account, it is hardly surprising. "Leonardo would go two, three or four days without touching the picture," the writer Bandello recounts, "but he went every day for two or three hours to look at it and examine it."

Unfortunately, it was not long before the painting began to deteriorate seriously. Instead of using the fresco technique of swiftly applying pigments on to damp, lime-based plaster before it dries, Leonardo chose to use a preparation of dry calcium carbonate, which meant he could paint at his leisure. Unbeknown to Leonardo, however, a spring ran directly underneath the refectory wall. Within decades, water infiltrated his preparation, made it swell up and caused widespread colour loss.

In 1556, the painter Vasari spoke of it as "so badly affected that nothing is visible except a mass of blurs". More recent history has hardly been kinder to the work. In 1796, French soldiers used the refectory as a stables and threw stones at the painting. In 1800, the building was flooded, and during world war two it suffered a direct hit from an Allied bomb. Fortunately, the north wall on which The Last Supper was painted was protected by sandbags. It was the only one left standing.

"Every day we discover yet another wonderful surprise," says Brombilla Barcilon. These include the vivid original colours, as well as reflections in the glasses on the table and the landscape in the background, which could no longer be seen. She has also revealed that the restorers of the past completely changed the profiles of a number of the figures, displaced the eye of one of them, and even mistook a shadow for a beard. "The painting is completely different now," she says. "Before, the faces and expressions were very firm and rigid. Now the figures are moving once again."

Where there is no longer any of the original painting left, Brombilla Barcilon applies watercolours in neutral tones to fill in the gaps. This allows the picture to be read as a coherent whole, but she is careful not to try to add in any missing elements, such as folds in the clothing. For this part of the work, she insists that it is not only a question of technique, but also of sensibility.

"A restorer really has to understand the painter, to enter into the spirit of the work," she says. "Otherwise the restoration becomes completely mechanical and the painting's value is diminished."

Eighteen years after she began, Brambilla Barcilon looks tired, and admits that there have been times when she has felt like giving up. "There have been moments of depression, times when I have said to myself in anguish, 'I must finish, I must finish, I must finish, I must finish.'" And what is she planning to do once the restoration is completed? "Basta! I'll take my retirement." And yet, at the same time, she will greatly miss the painting once the restoration is complete. "When the scaffolding is dismantled, that will be that. I will have lost my friend, the work of art, everything."

Tricks of the tradesmen

THEATRE
Michael Billington

FIFTIES Absurdism unites with social realism in Simon Block's Chimps at London's Hampstead Theatre, a savage cautionary tale about the devastating effect of opening your door to travelling salesmen. It's too long by 20 minutes but, playing upon one's darkest fears, it more than fulfils the promise shown by Block's Not A Game For Boys.

Block's point is that salesmen prey on their victims' weaknesses but that they themselves are often deeply divided. So we see Mark, a feckless designer of children's alphabet books, and his pregnant, breadwinning partner, Stevie, suddenly being told by a pair of doorstepping hucksters that their house is in danger of collapse through brick decay. The news not only exposes the cracks in their relationship, but it also reveals the fissures between the fast-talking solution-peddler Lawrence and his conscienceless assistant Abriel.

Although the territory is not unfamiliar and the outcome is grimly predictable, Block scores through the sheer accuracy of his observation. This is precisely how salesmen operate. They identify a spurious problem, blind you with bogus science and then seek to tie you to them for life.

Admittedly, you wonder how Mark could be such a mutt as to swallow this stuff about degenerate pointing. But my own critical sales-resistance was overcome by Nicholas Woodeson's magnetic performance as Lawrence, toting his water-repellent coating. You soon learn that the character, an ex-poulterer on the skids, is fighting for his own professional life; and Woodeson, pushing Polaroid snaps of the doomed house across the table like a Mississippi riverboat card-sharp, combines slick salesman's patter with a sense of desperation and residual decency. I was reminded of the late Leonard Rossiter in his heyday.



Woodeson . . . magnetic salesman

The other parts pale in comparison but even if the action has the inevitability of an old Ionesco play, it is underpinned by a deadly accurate picture of the dangerous predators roaming the north London jungle.

Divided by a common language

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

IF EVER the difference between American film-making and that of the rest of the English-speaking world could be easily illustrated, Alan Taylor's Palookaville and David Caesar's Idiot Box would do the trick. They have largely the same basic plot — youth on its uppers, gormlessly making a dash for freedom. But they are definitely not the same sort of film.

Palookaville, the American version, is the reverse of Hollywood slick, being a small-budget independent production in which a trio of young men contemplate turning to crime in dead-end New Jersey. Their first heist is botched — they break into a bakery instead of the jeweller's next door. It's not likely that they'll get rich quick.

Russ (Vincent Gallo) is their leader. He lives with his mother and is having an abortive affair with the girl next door. Sid (William Forsythe) is divorced and lives with his dogs for company. Jerry (Adam Trese) is married and furious when his wife is sexually harassed at the supermarket and loses her job when he objects.

The tone is comic and tries for charm more than hard-edged realism, with a bit of social satire on the side. These are society's losers and they are self-deprecating enough to know it. But you don't see much of the context. Plot and performance are the thing.

The whole is entertaining but resolutely apolitical, which is the real difference between the two styles of film-making. What you get is ironic entertainment that makes the film cherishable as a far cry from bratpack romanticism.

The Australian Idiot Box, on the other hand, is far meaner. It laughs just as much at its protagonists (Kev played by Ben Mendelsohn and Mick by Jeremy Sims), but its tone is icily critical of Australian suburbia.

Where Taylor's genuinely nice American film is messily made, as if any more polish would somehow betray it, Caesar's is stylish and assured. Joe Pickering's sharp widescreen cinematography alone would give it distinction.

Above all, Idiot Box has a scatological irreverence which proclaims that when it thumbs its nose at good taste it isn't just playing. Perhaps the nearest to it is another Australian movie, P J Hogan's Muriel's Wedding — despite some foolish comparisons that have been made with Trainspotting.

At any rate, it is an exceptional little film, sneakily observant and aggressively taking Australia apart using what one can only call angry comedy. Palookaville isn't angry. It's also just fun: line after line of dialogue makes you laugh out loud. But if Idiot Box did merely that, Caesar would feel that he'd failed.

Broken English is from Robin Scholes, the producer of Once Were Warriors, the most successful New Zealand film of all time. Lightning, however, rarely strikes twice. This story, directed by Gregor Nicholas, hasn't that film's passion or flair. What it does have is an important subject matter for a country where inter-racial relationships sometimes cause appalling conflicts.

In this case, a Croatian family, headed by Rade Serbedzija's oppressive father, is upended by the affair of their daughter (Aleksandra Vujcic) with a Maori (Julian Arahanga, from Once Were Warriors). Locked in her house by her father, the daughter watches as violence erupts. Set in Auckland, the film is not kind to the Croatians, who are portrayed as bullet-headed, drug-running immigrants. As a portrait of working-class life, Broken English rings true, but without a perceptive screenplay it slips into melodrama.

Frowning, not waving

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

AIRPORT on BBC1. Heathrow at dawn. Steve and Russell, the resident photographers, are waiting for Princess Diana. She hurries out to her car and moves her hand as if waving. But it isn't a wave: it is a perfectly timed gesture that hides her face completely from the cameras.

Steve and Russell, who have been up since 3am to do this job, laugh. Photographers are born bouncing.

Russell says: "You see all these lovely pictures of her abroad, tiptoeing through the minefields, and she comes back here at the end of the tour and does that," and he sketches the wave.

Steve says: "Diana makes it very difficult for photographers sometimes. I have actually seen her come out of the door backwards. Today was one of the worst. I just had to stand there and laugh when I saw that." And he waves the wave.

"Really shafted," says Russell.

"Yes, really shafted," says Steve.

The same day, Pamela Anderson arrives to publicise deep-crust pizza. Pammy is famous for looking wonderful in a swimsuit, so she probably doesn't eat a lot of deep-crust pizza. Dozens of photographers run backwards in front of her like courtiers. She walks smiling into the clicking wall of clattering cameras like a queen bee in flight, carrying her swarm with her.

I remember a third famous blonde towards the end of her life, refusing a request for a picture. "I have," said Marlene Dietrich, "been photogwaphed to death."

A second series of the comedy **Third Rock from the Sun** has started on BBC2. The BBC shows it an hour later than Sky One, which has been running the same series since March. So, pay attention now: the earlier one is later, and the later one earlier. This has something to do with the speed of light and the curvature of the earth.

Third Rock is a fresh and fetching little comedy, but the credits are really engrossing. Katy, Denise and Gregg are listed as assistants to the writer. That's nice. Though what anyone can do to help a writer, apart from keeping out of his way when he howls like a dog, is a mystery to me.

S J Perelman, who wrote fireworks for the Marx Brothers, worked in a shed in the garden. No phone, you see. He said a chipmunk watched him closely and concluded that his work was throwing screwed-up pieces of paper in a bin. P G Wodehouse, who invented a sort of toilet roll so he could type without the momentary distraction of changing paper, dedicated one book "To my daughter Leonora, without whose never-failing sympathy and encouragement this book would have been finished in half the time." Probably only Robert Benchley, who put LADIES on his office door, would have welcomed Katy and Denise.

Third Rock is rich in producers, though, like the writer's assistants, it is hard to imagine what they actually do. There is an executive in charge of production, five executive producers (one of them called Marcy Carsey, which is catchy), two co-executive producers, two supervising producers, three plain producers and a consulting producer. Which one, you wonder nervously, is the Big Giant Head?

Third Rock, in case you were wondering, is about four aliens who are sent on a scouting mission to Earth by the Big Giant Head. To pass unremarked, they adopt human form and call themselves Tom, Dick, Harry and Sally. In the cliffhanger at the end of the first series, Dick was supplanted by a renegade alien, Evil Dick.

I enjoyed watching Evil Dick trying to dominate that foreign concept the telephone. Ding, ding. "What do you want?" Ding, ding. "What do you want?" Ding, ding. "STOP IT!" The phone stopped ringing. This actually works. Try it.

Mighty call for peace

FIRST NIGHT OF THE PROMS
Martin Kettle

THE first night of the Proms generally consists of a single work these days, often a choral masterpiece, to start the two-month festival with an appropriately mighty statement. Surprisingly, this was only the third time that Beethoven's Missa Solemnis has set the season rolling, but under Bernard Haitink's assured direction it felt an absolutely appropriate choice.

It was a busy week for Haitink, closing Covent Garden and then opening the Proms, but this performance found him at his assured best.

Because this was London's Royal Albert Hall, the large and echoing choral forces always tended to dominate in any contest with the orchestra, and the BBC Singers and BBC Symphony Chorus certainly gave their all.

The Missa Solemnis begins with three powerful movements of this kind, whose energy and creativity are constantly miraculous. But from midway through the Credo, Beethoven's Mass becomes the utterance of a more troubled spirit and the music becomes more intimate, personal, episodic and vulnerable.

Haitink's long experience means that he knew exactly when to hold back the ensemble and establish these moods. As a result, this was a very richly contrasted reading.

In a distinguished quartet of soloists, Karita Mattila stood out. Mattila is in a wonderful phase of her career, and the way she shaded her tone was a lesson in itself. Catherine Wyn-Rogers, Herbert Lippert and Anthony Michaels-Moore completed the excellent quartet.

The Missa Solemnis, which starts which such uncompromising certainties, ends with some of the most touching and almost theatrical music in any devotional work. The sounds of war, trumpets and drums, are heard in the distance as the chorus sings the prayer for peace.

Being Beethoven, this is not merely a spiritual prayer but a plea for peace from and for real human beings in the actual world. As the soloists and chorus repeated their soft and urgent "Dona nobis pacem" on this hot summer night in the Albert Hall, it was impossible not to think of Northern Ireland.

Family friend . . . Adolf Hitler with Wieland and Winifred Wagner at the 1938 Bayreuth festival

Dramatic overtures

Ian Traynor reports on a new Wagnerian feud at the Bayreuth festival

WHEN the curtain rises on Richard Wagner at the sold-out Bayreuth festival every July, it confirms that, despite this year's torrential rains, the summer has finally arrived for Germany's smart set and the international jet set.

A production of Tristan And Isolde kicked off this year's two-month-long festival at the Bavarian shrine to the ever-controversial 19th century composer. But this year's real Bayreuth drama is being enacted offstage by the composer's descendants, who are squabbling over the Wagner legacy, control of Bayreuth, the family history and the Nazi issue.

Wolfgang Wagner, aged 77, Richard's grandson, continues to exert a total grip on Bayreuth, his son has just published a lacerating account of the family's requited but repressed love affair with Adolf Hitler and Nazism, and his niece is mounting a bid to unseat Wolfgang and take over the running of the festival.

The Wagner clan is no stranger to incestuous backstabbing. But this year the infighting has plumbed new depths, as carefully timed publications and interviews have vied for the support of public opinion.

The feud has been heightened by a new book on Hitler and Wagner by Joachim Köhler which unearths copious detail of the Nazi leader's obsession with the maestro and his closeness to Wagner's offspring, who treated Hitler as part of the family.

The book has not met with universal approval. In Wagner's Hitler, Mr Köhler portrays the composer as the nastiest of ideological anti-Semites who inspired Hitler and paved the way for the Holocaust. The claims are not new but the wealth of detail on the Hitler-Wagner relationship is. But it is in the family itself that the knives are out.

Wolfgang has run the festival and guarded the legacy obsessively and single-handedly since his brother Wieland died 31 years ago.

But Wolfgang's son Gottfried accuses his father of revering Hitler as a substitute father and then burying his past for decades, and Wolfgang's niece Nike paints him as a vicious megalomaniac concerned only with the box office.

Wolfgang, she said recently, was "irrational", a "master of dismissal, fits of rage, and smokescreen", who had turned Bayreuth into a "German nationalist fetish"

Gottfried, in a book published earlier this year, paints a nightmarish picture of growing up at Bayreuth, where Hitler was a regular family guest. He hints that the Führer was his grandmother Winifred's lover. He alleges that his parents and grandparents knew all about the Holocaust and the fate of some of the Jewish musicians employed at Bayreuth, but lifted not a finger to help.

Wolfgang last month denounced the allegntions as "slander and fabrication".

His niece Nike appears to be equally embittered, in her case by her ambition to succeed Wolfgang. Under him, she said, the festival had become a sacred rite, characterised by parochialism, habit and "mass obedience".

But the well-heeled opera-goers seem not to mind, flocking to the festival each summer to worship at the shrine. There is a waiting list of years for a ticket.

Kindly light from Barnsley

OBITUARY
Brian Glover

BRIAN GLOVER, who has died from a brian tumour at the age of 63, was an man of many parts: actor, writer, one-time wrestler and teacher. Yet whatever roles he played after his first part as the bumptious games master in Kes, he remained reassuringly familiar: a bald, rubbery, pink-faced figure, whose bluff manner seemed to conceal a warm-hearted decency.

Glover was born in Barnsley, where his father combined a corner-shop grocery with a second career as a wrestler. Wrestling was clearly in the genes since Glover junior later took to the ring to supplement his student grant. Once, in Wilmslow, when a foreign wrestler failed to turn up, he found himself being introduced as "Leon Arras — from Paris, France"; and the name stuck.

Even when he took a job as a teacher of English and French, he continued to live a double life. On Friday nights, he would fly to the continent, where he would earn good money in the ring. Then it would be back to school on a Monday morning with the equivalent of a month's pay in his pocket.

It was in 1968 that he made the break into acting. His fellow school-teacher, Barry Hines, had written a novel, A Kestrel For A Knave, about to be turned into a film by Tony Garnett and Ken Loach. Hines suggested Glover for the role of the overbearing games master, Sugden, and his performance lit up the screen. In the football-match scene he became the epitome of every teacher who releases his own thwarted ambitions on the boys.

Glover was clearly a natural and he was soon in constant demand whenever directors wanted a tough, working-class character, built like a tank but capable of displaying an inner sensitivity.

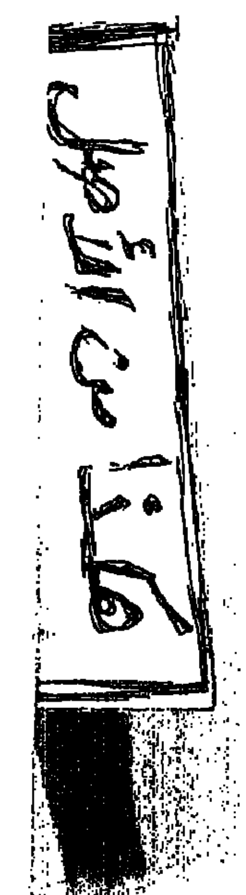
Much of Glover's best work in the theatre was done for Bill Bryden's famously earthy Cottesloe company at the National Theatre in the late 1970s and early 1980s. He played God in Tony Harrison's alliterative, working-class version of The Mysteries. It was Glover who established the tone of the whole trilogy as, from the height of a fork-lift truck, he announced in his richest Barnsley tones: "I am gracious and great, God withouten beginning."

Glover wrote copiously for television, usually in a style of comic realism and appeared in every kind of theatre, specialising in a bluff, bold heartiness.

He was an ultra-reliable pro who, shrewdly, knew that his Tetley Tea Folk ads were his private pension scheme. But there was more to Glover than met the eye: he was a kindly, intelligent man, who had lived a remarkable life and who managed to invest many of the characters he played with a residual goodness.

Michael Billington

Brian Glover, actor, writer, wrestler, born April 2, 1934; died July 24, 1997



New fiction

Lucy Atkins

Easy Peasy, by Lesley Glaister (Bloomsbury, £14.99)

WHEN Zelda's father commits suicide, she begins to uncover his traumatic past as a prisoner of war in a Japanese camp, whilst revisiting her own guilty past — the torment she inflicted on "Puddle Duck", a partially deaf and disabled child whom her father favoured, largely because (she now discovers) he was involved with the child's prostitute mother. Amidst all this, Zelda's lesbian lover seems to be leaving her for another woman. Sounds more depressing than it is: Glaister is finely tuned to the subtleties of relationships and childhood motivations, and she writes convincingly about the secrets that lurk in most family histories.

Rancid Aluminium, by James Hawes (Cape, £9.99)

THIS is fiction for blokes who should be too old for this sort of thing: it is fast and self-obsessed, but, annoyingly, rather funny.

Thirtysomething bloke worrying about baldness, beer gut and sperm-count discovers that his dodgy tax returns have come home to roost and his company is facing bankruptcy. He borrows loads of money from a Russian man called Kant and gets himself into a gun-toting, vodka-swilling, leggy Russian-temptress-shagging mess.

Le Testament Français, by Andrei Makine, trans Geoffrey Strachan (Sceptre, £16.99)

FOURTH novel by the bilingual Makine, a Russian emigré to France, this has deservedly won several French literary prizes. The narrator is a Russian boy, growing up in a city on the Volga in the seventies but spending summers with his French grandmother in Siberia. As a grown-up, the narrator finally gets to France but his grandmother dies before he can send for her, leaving him a letter containing the key to his own past. Makine links personal and national histories in a beguiling and sophisticated novel.

The Love Parade, by Matthew Branton (Hamish Hamilton, £10.99)

JAKE, ex-member of a boy band, feels rejected by The System, particularly the media world (he can't get anyone to take an interest in his screenplay) so he falls in with glam chick Brett and her brother River, and together they try to pull a scam on the media corporation which has failed to recognise their talents. Branton's style is distinctive, but there is a danger that the hip and buzzing media world which nearly finishes Jake off could have a similar effect on the reader.



Two systems, one army . . . Troops of the Chinese Liberation Army en route to Hong Kong PHOTO LARRY CHAN

English bull in a china shop

Ian Buruma

The Last Governor: Chris Patten and the Handover of Hong Kong
by Jonathan Dimbleby
Little, Brown 461pp £22.50

JONATHAN Dimbleby's riveting book is nothing if not partisan: he is a close friend of his subject, Chris Patten; he has had unique access to Government House, and by and large he argues Patten's case as a kind of journalistic advocate. Since many of the criticisms against Patten are personal — he is a grandstander, a crusader, a vain politician out for his own glory — some of Dimbleby's apologia is personal as well, to the point, here and there, of sounding a bit like Hello! magazine. We do not really need to know about the governor's splendid little terrier dogs, or his charm as a dinner-party host. He may be a fine fellow. Indeed, I think he is a fine fellow. But that is hardly the point.

What, then, is the main case against Patten? It has been made with special venom by Sir Percy Cradock, former ambassador to Beijing, foreign-policy adviser to Margaret Thatcher and China-hand par excellence. Before 1992, so the Cradock line goes, diplomatists (such as Sir Percy himself) had "finessed" a deal with China, which allowed a gerrymandered legislature to continue after 1997. According to the Joint Declaration of 1984, future legislatures would be "constituted by elections". What kind of elections was unclear. But it was understood, though not publicised, that democracy was never on offer.

Then Patten came charging along, with great fanfare, antagonising the Chinese, whose cultural subtleties he did not understand, introducing all manner of democratic reforms, which Beijing could not possibly accept. As a result, British relations with China froze. Patten's reforms were diamantled. A freely elected legislature was replaced by Beijing's appointees. And Hong Kong is worse off than it would have been if wiser counsel had prevailed.

Since Dimbleby's book tells a personal story, his cast tends to be neatly divided into heroes and villains. The heroes are the last governor and the Hong Kong democrats, and the villains are the serpentine Foreign Office China-hands, the greedy Hong Kong tycoons, and the loathsome hard men of Beijing. To dwell on personalities risks missing a larger political point.

Before 1989, Hong Kong was treated by Beijing and London as a diplomatic problem: how to effect a smooth transition from one colonial master to another. The events in Tiananmen Square changed everything. Hong Kong became a political problem. Chris Patten and the democrats (and millions of Hong Kong people) understood this; Sir Percy evidently did not. Beijing's hard men, on the other hand, understood the political consequences of Tiananmen only too well: they became harsher and more paranoid as a result.

It had always been a convenient notion shared by the Hong Kong business élite and the British colonial government that the Hong Kong Chinese did not care about politics, let alone democracy. After the spring of 1989, when a million people marched in the streets of Hong Kong, this idea was shattered. People did want democracy, if only to protect them against the arbitrary power of Beijing. They did not get it, but at least they got a Bill of Rights in 1991.

This was several years after one of the most shameful episodes in modern British diplomatic history, described by Dimbleby in devastating detail. The British had promised Hong Kong direct legislative elections for 1988. Beijing did not like it. A survey was held to test Hong Kong public opinion. Quite safe, old boy, you can hear people at the Hong Kong Club say, these chaps aren't interested in politics, you know. Unfortunately, a majority was in favour of direct elections. So the figures had to be doctored to show the opposite result to please Beijing. The direct elections were off. Such diplomatic shenanigans were simply not possible any more after Tiananmen. The time for such "finesse" was over.

Theoretically, when Patten arrived on the scene in 1992, he had a choice: to please Beijing by keeping things smooth and easy on the diplomatic front, or to risk upsetting the Chinese rulers by having direct elections, promoting civil liberties and promulgating laws to protect them. The first option would mean continuing with a gerrymandered legislature, emasculating the Bill of Rights, giving in to such demands as loyalty oaths (to Beijing) from legislative candidates and allowing the local press to be intimidated. Patten has been accused of behaving like an arrogant Westminster bull in a delicate china shop, but in fact he had little choice: pushing for democratic reforms was not a matter of grandstanding or careerism: it was what the Hong Kong population demanded.

He gave Hong Kong the opportunity to show that its colonial subjects were not just interested in, but could handle, democratic politics in a perfectly responsible manner. The tycoons, both British and local, were outraged: this was not the way things were done in Hong Kong, this was upsetting China, this was bad for business.

Like the diplomatic China-hands, they felt that Patten had trampled all over their turf. Of course Patten's reforms came far too late. But that does not mean he was wrong to introduce them.

No doubt Patten bore his own honour and that of his country in mind when he made his inadequate, last-minute stabs at democracy. Dimbleby tells us as much. But how is Britain's honour, or indeed Hong Kong's future, better served? By finessing secret deals with dictators and selling such deals as victories? Or by laying the groundwork for a democratic government even though it looks like a temporary defeat?

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £19 contact CultureShop (see below left)

How to stay afloat in a sea of grief

Matt Seaton

Swimming the Channel
by Sally Friedman
Secker & Warburg 248pp £9.99

THERE must be something in the air. Or rather, in the water. Five minutes ago the pool was empty, its surface limpid; now it is filled with writers thrashing away wildly in the race to complete books about swimming.

Oliver Sacks, the psychiatrist author who never travels anywhere without a plastic bag containing his flippers, wrote recently in the New Yorker about the sensual joys of swimming. Roger Deakin meanwhile is working on a book for Chatto & Windus about a swimming journey round Britain.

We must love water, at some primal level, perhaps because floating in it reminds us both of our prehistoric ancestry emerging from the ocean and of our own personal prehistories of emerging from our little seas of amniotic fluid. How strange, then, that we Europeans and North Americans learnt to swim properly only by copying the Polynesian Islanders' overarm crawl barely a century ago. Perhaps our water was too cold for people to experiment.

Temperature is one of the major preoccupations of Sally Friedman's Swimming The Channel. The cold, as she eloquently describes, is the greatest enemy of the long-distance swimmer: all the warmth generated by the constant calorie-burning effort of 72 strokes a minute for hours on end is sucked away by the clammy embrace of the water, leaving the swimmer chilled to the marrow and in a state of hypothermic confusion.

But Friedman also writes about a chill which cannot be allayed by the layer of goose-grease the swimmer slaps on before venturing in — the cold comfortlessness of bereavement. Swimming The Channel is anything but a simple book about swimming: it is an elegy for her dead husband.

The two strands are intertwined. Her husband Paul was an unstinting supporter of her ambition to make a Channel crossing. Back in 1983 Friedman broke the women's record for the Round Manhattan race, a 28.5-mile swim through waters which, frankly, make the stomach churn just to think of. Swimming The Channel, then, was no mere flight of fancy.

After her months of preparation, and on the eve of departure for England, Paul is killed by a truck running a red light on Eighth Avenue. What has been a training diary punctuated by personal reminiscences becomes a journal of her slow and painful journey through grief.

The book loses some of its form and fluency at this point, and one cannot help feeling that the style of unselfconscious emotional disclosure does not translate across the Atlantic too well. As Friedman herself observes, grief is essentially private, beyond articulation, and the words that people use in these circumstances are, by some cruel linguistic law, necessarily banal.

What saves Swimming The Channel from mawkishness is the way that the theme of swimming resurfaces as metaphor. The loneliness of her plight, her sense of her grief's exceptionalism, is like the loneliness of the long-distance swimmer. If you don't swim, you sink; there's nothing for it but to push on through to the other side.

Footnotes to the big questions

Stuart Jeffries

Existentialists and Mystics: Essays on Philosophy and Literature
by Iris Murdoch
Chatto 546pp £20

EXISTENTIALISTS And Mystics will certainly be Iris Murdoch's last book of philosophy and, quite possibly, her last book. Murdoch, now 77, is suffering from Alzheimer's Disease and has recently expressed her fear that she will never be able to write again.

It's a strange book. Not that there is anything weird or unusual in a philosopher publishing a valedictory collection of essays from 1950 to 1986. Rather, the appearance of Existentialists And Mystics is strange because it is not clear why the book is worth publishing today. Who is it for? Her work is ignored by professional philosophers, and regarded as being as baggy and dubious as her worst novels. Even that surely dwindling breed of readers who love her fiction are unlikely to stray here.

The book comes in a year when the grand old personages of British philosophy, who have dictated the public image if not the substance of the subject since the war, have published vast, valedictory volumes.

It is the end of an era. At best this was the era in which philosophers were public figures, who could write attractively and so communicate their thoughts to a broader public than most anglophone philosophers this century have managed. Admittedly they wouldn't communicate very much — Murdoch and Isaiah Berlin, particularly, prefer to perform, to be dinner-party show-offs, alluding incessantly to their broad reading, rather than doing the harder work of philosophical argument.

At least Murdoch's philosophy conceives of her task as to tackle grand issues. Goodness. God. Love. The role of art. The meaning of life. But then her philosophy is Plato without the Socratic dialectic. Plato answered, or at least tackled, all these big questions; Murdoch consists of obligingly allusive exposition of her master's voice. And why not? Alfred North Whitehead said that all subsequent philosophy consisted of footnotes to Plato.

Like Berlin, her chief philosophical virtue is that she is a signpost. Berlin points to the neglected political thinkers Herzen and Vico. Murdoch nods decorously in Plato's direction. With all three one feels one would do better to read the real thing.

And yet Murdoch is a fascinating study. In an age of rampant selfishness, she preaches a climb from the dark Platonic cave of human delusion to the sun of goodness. "Humility is a rare virtue and an unfashionable one and one which is often hard to discern. Only rarely does one meet somebody in whom it positively shines, in whom one apprehends with amazement the absence of avaricious tentacles of the self."

Murdoch: a decorous nod in Plato's direction

Murdoch wrote these words 30 years ago for a lecture called "The Sovereignty of Good Over Other Concepts". If they were unfashionable then, they are positively alien now.

Terry Eagleton, for instance, damned her thus: "Murdoch's intelligence is constrained by her unconscious ideological prejudices, so that she seems incapable, unlike William Blake, of seeing the dangers of an ethics of selflessness. To lay aside self-interest, to relinquish selfish desire, is the familiar advice given by the privileged."

But here Eagleton is too peremptory: the familiar advice, rather, given by political philosophers from Hobbes to Rawls, is that we are selfish creatures whose baseness needs to be circumscribed by the state.

Murdoch's philosophy represents an unfashionable alternative, an other-worldly milieu as odd to encounter for the first time as the singular settings of her novels. Those books teem with fraught characters, whose philosophies and feelings are expressed so articulately that one doubts that they are as truly passionate as Murdoch intends.

It's as though Murdoch were a god come down from Olympus, exasperated with the pettiness and human frailties of her co-deities, and determined to lure us to the straight and narrow of Platonic perfection. The result is a clutch of novels where characters called Bellamy, Clement, Louise, Jeremy and Emil jockey for attention *on the same page*.

These books are the dramatisations of the philosophy that those who dare will find in Existentialists And Mystics, where human passion is profound but endlessly unstable. Confronted with the histrionics of Murdochland, one yearns for the mellow dignity of Murdoch's philosophy.

Speak the unspeakable

Kathy Evans

A Brutal Friendship
by Said K Aburish
Gollancz 396pp £20

FOR several decades now, the Palestinian author Said Aburish has been making Arab governments wince with pain and embarrassment. Why? Because among Arab authors, he is almost alone in speaking the truth.

His latest work, A Brutal Friendship, follows a tradition stretching back over half a dozen books covering the undemocratic and corrupt nature of Arab regimes. Among a small circle of Arab writers and journalists who dare to speak the unspeakable, Aburish is fast becoming an icon. To some Arab states, he has proved an author more traumatising than Salman Rushdie.

Such role models are sorely needed. The handful of Arab writers and journalists who reject self-censorship face the isolated lives of those on blacklists — visas denied, job problems and exclusion from the circles of power, even the occasional spell in jail.

Those who do succumb to such pressure are rewarded with murmured confidences and leaks, the very stuff of journalism, and end up recognised as admired "experts" who have special insights and contacts at the top.

The net result of decades of such blacklists and inducements is that Arabs are simply unable to discuss their lives and problems in their own media. This stifling of debate has been compounded by a total absence of democracy and spawned a militancy that threatens the very Arab liberal tradition the West claims it wants to preserve. Despite the obvious dangers, this gap between the region's people and its rulers has been ignored by all Western governments. It is this which Aburish calls the "brutal friendship": an alliance between the West, their arms manufacturers and the dictators they serve and nurture.

In his usual punchy style, Aburish's opening sentence says it all: "There are no legitimate regimes in the Arab Middle East," he begins. In the Arab Gulf, the defence salesmen's dream, not a single state subscribes to the International Bill of Human Rights. There is no free press, or political parties. Yet the area is considered by the West as "a stabilising factor in the region".

Western acceptance of this lack of democracy has left the region's dialogue with the West in the hands of an exclusive and unrepresentative élite. The exclusion of the opinions of ordinary Arabs is what has nourished the historical misunderstanding that plagues Arab-West relations, Aburish argues.

Iraq, Syria and Libya are all boycotted by the West and their governments have proved the most oppressive of all the Arab regimes. Yet their leaders are admired by many ordinary Arabs for their continued refusal to succumb to US pressure. Tragically, for their own people and the Arabs as a whole, it is Saddam, Hafez Assad of Syria and Libya's Gadafy who hold the banner of Arab nationalism.

Nowhere is this tragedy in Western policy more apparent than in the Middle East peace process. Arab frustration over such issues as Palestine and Jerusalem is out of control, warns Aburish. The rhetoric of the Arab élite no longer satisfies the people's demand for real peace and real democracy. Painful, but true. So keep on writing, Aburish.

Shoe-leather account of the Grand Tour

Nicholas Fraser

Travels as a Brussels Scout
by Nick Middleton
Weidenfeld & Nicolson 256pp £17.99

BOOKS about Europe fall into two categories: the plumber's manual, filled with meaningless diagrams purporting to explain recent refinements of the Brussels bureaucracy, and the slender essay, usually the work of a French savant, in which the progress of the European idea, or lack of it, is elegantly adumbrated. Mercifully, Nick Middleton's travel book comes from a somewhat different tradition. Living in Oxford, working as a geographer, he has given us a post-Bryson, shoe-leather account of contemporary Europe.

Previous forays took him to Mongolia and Africa, so it is not surprising that Travels As A Brussels Scout betrays a nostalgic affinity with what a German, quoted in the book, refers to as "the outskirts" of the Continent. He is good with bad weather and alcohol, and one of his best excursions is to Finland in mid-winter via the Stockholm ferry. Leaving the ice zone for the chocolate belt, however, he falters, panicking in Paris, where he devotes most of his time to pooper-scoopers and Disney. He hits form in the Netherlands, where his topographical expertise renders vivid the tulip beds of Keukenhof. "A deep breath through the nose was enough to send you into orbit," he writes, catching the proper tone of mild awe that is owed to Dutch landscape.

The serious European traveller is obliged to confront the problem of the European Union itself. What is the Union? What does it do? These are questions that Middleton, busy with bad weather or time-tables, understandably tends to duck, though he concludes that the Union is "fundamentally a good thing". But the EU isn't a superpower, and, as its staunchest admirers come to realise, never will be. It exists, like Belgium, where it is so appropriately based, as a result of mid-century compromises between more important geopolitical players.

This makes "Brussels" hard to write about, and it explains why few serious historians have bothered with post-war Western Europe. It is necessary to look outside the Union to find much of what remains of Europe — in Poland, Bosnia, St Petersburg. It is in the shabby, ill-lit periphery that one can find the genuine "pluralism" implied by the European idea. The absence of these places from his book, which deals only with countries from the Union, is what gives Middleton's forays their hectic, departure-lounge airlessness.

For the past 40-odd years, the "integration" of Europe has been encouraged from Brussels. This has given Europeans neither a coherent political community, nor a solid sense of European identity. However, the federal project has contributed to the decline in importance of nation states, not primarily in an economic sense, but as entities worthy of love or indeed hatred.

It is most painfully apparent in France, principal sponsor of European integration, where its effects on the tradition of French Republicanism can be seen, horrifyingly, in the rise to influence of the xenophobic anti-capitalist Le Pen. The only truly happy European countries are those which have been freed by the EU from the grasp of powerful neighbours (ie, Finland or Ireland), or Germany, where the odours of mid-century nationalism require permanent deodorisation by the EU.

Short of another Armageddon, which is not improbable, given Europe's history, the Union will probably survive. Nick Middleton encountered opponents to "Brussels" in every country, and they are getting stronger each year. But there are also countries queuing up to join. There are as many Europes as there are travellers, or Europeans; and all of them speak to us. I'm not sure whether I'll bother with drunks on the Stockholm ferry, but I do intend to take up tulip-sniffing.

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Nature all in the mind's eye

Paul Evans

LAST month 100,000 people met at a rally in London's Hyde Park to demonstrate against a parliamentary bill that proposes to ban the hunting of wild mammals with dogs. Many had walked there from Wales and the English shires, protesting that a ban on fox hunting represents an urban infringement of traditional rights and threatens the whole way of life in the countryside.

Is there a cultural apartheid between town and country where neither side recognises the needs and aspirations of the other, or is this the fag-end of an age-old dispute descending into grotesque pantomime? Concealed beneath this protest against the colonisation of the countryside by urban sensibilities is a fight to protect a fading world. The countryside is dead.

This not to say that the land, country, rural environment, cultural landscapes or whatever we want to call the historic mosaic of places outside Britain's towns and cities, is dead — of course it's not. But the notion of the country as the cultural antithesis of the city has gone. Social and economic changes have put paid to this.

The legitimate pursuit of "field" — a fitting euphemism for blood — sports is held by some as the last thread which holds the weave of country life together. It's as if field sports were some badge of ethnic difference defining the true countryman or woman: if you don't get your kicks killing wild animals, you must be a townie. Of course this is absurd. There are plenty of townies who love killing animals. As with conservation groups, the hunting-shooting-fishing organisations have a largely urban membership base.

The romantic idea is that nature's place is in the countryside and because countryfolk are closer to it they have a deeper understanding, their doings are more "natural" and so they're best placed to take care of it.

Blinded by ideals of picturesque beauty, we often fail to see this is a land of betrayal and tragedy. The violence done to nature to bend it to human will and the violence done to people by the powerful, are inextricably linked. What we have come to cherish as the countryside is a palimpsest on which successive generations have scratched their own ambitions. Every time political, social and economic forces make a new omelette out of the countryside, some poor sod's eggs get broken. What really stitches the land together, more than hedges, ditches and stone walls, is the myriad individual tragedies of the human and non-human beings which make this a land of restless ghosts.

Field sports' supporters claim that "arrogant metropolitans" threaten a natural way of life that supports conservation for the benefit of all. Opponents of blood sports counter that the cruel treatment of animals is unnatural and unconscionable, and conservation is everybody's business. So what is nature and who can claim to represent it?

We are witnessing in Britain the end of an idealised countryside. The relationships between people and nature will have to be shaped by more imaginative negotiations.

"Nature," said William Blake, "is Imagination itself." Though the myths we live by and fight for may change, nature's fearful symmetry, its wildness, recognises none of our boundaries, it is all around and within us. And, unlike the countryside, the imagination is a free country.


ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

Chess Leonard Barden

THE long-running World Championship saga took another twist last month with an imaginative move by Fide, the International Chess Federation, which ran a unified contest until Garry Kasparov and Nigel Short privatised the title in 1993. Currently the feuding protagonists are Kasparov and his breakaway PCA group, Fide and its ambitious new head Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, Anatoly Karpov, the out-of-form Fide champion, and IBM's Deep Blue super-computer.

Ilyumzhinov announced, to scepticism, that the next title contest would be a 100-player knock-out played in Kalmykiya, the tiny Russian republic where he is a semi-benevolent dictator, and financed with an astonishing $5 million prize fund. But now he has filled in the details and the event has become credible. The money will come from Halzan, a Moscow-based oil and gas firm, conveniently prospecting in Kalmykia. The early rounds will be played from December 8–25 in Groningen, the semi-finals from December 26–31 in Kalmykiya and the final from January 1–9, 1998, in Lausanne, under the patronage of the International Olympic Committee president, Juan Samaranch.

The schedule allows for Kasparov and Karpov to join in at the semi-final stage, a manoeuvre both have so far rejected, despite a personal appeal from Samaranch to Kasparov. But many believe that Karpov, not known for willingly renouncing titles, will change his mind.

Meanwhile Kasparov, despite winning the latest élite tournament at Novgorod, is in danger of being bypassed. After the loss of its sponsor, Intel, the PCA's only visible activity now is to issue rating lists so Kasparov can't easily arrange title matches outside Fide. The Russian's final 19-move loss to Deep Blue convinced many rivals that he is no longer invincible, but putting his title on the line in a longer match with the computer may no longer be an option.

Kasparov was so rude during and after his defeat, implicitly accusing IBM of cheating, that the firm's executives, who had talked of further joint ventures with the Russian, now regard him as a loose cannon. Indeed, Deep Blue's victory was so high-profile that IBM may decide that the machine can retire early, in the manner of previous great US champions Morphy and Fischer.

But if Ilyumzhinov is metaphorically a pawn up, there is plenty that can go wrong. His plan to invite Deep Blue as a wild-card entry to the 100-player KO was squashed by outraged grandmasters, and he had to retract lamely, claiming the world title is "for humans only". And GMs will be nervous about the $5 million payout, remembering the long delays before Karpov and Kamsky received the prize money for their 1996 match in Kalmykiya.

The tournament itself could end in farce. When this year's Russian championship was staged as a KO to provide a dummy run, nearly half the matches, including the final, were decided by rapid-play or blitz tie-breaks. What will players think if their highest title is decided by one side playing blitz and winning on time several pieces down?

No 2483

White mates in five moves, against any defence.

No 2482: 1 Rh1! Rxe5 (if Kb2 2 Rh2+ Kc3 3 Rc2+ and 4 d7) 2 d7 Rd5+ 3 Kc2+ Ka2 4 Rh5! wins after Rxh5 5 d8Q or Rxd7 5 Ra5 mate (a study by H Rinck).

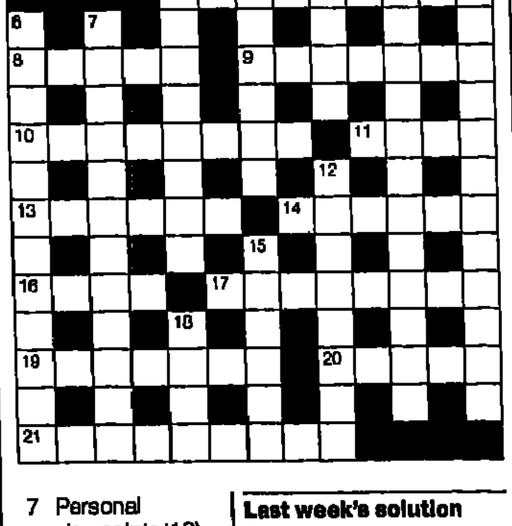
Quick crossword no. 377

Across

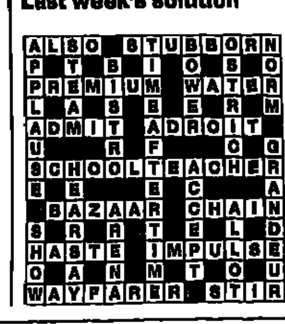
1 Ancient Greek citadel (9)
8 Alternative — additional (5)
9 Rice dish (7)
10 Tragedy (8)
11 The indigo plant (4)
13 Dislike (6)
14 Sailor (6)
16 Yawn (4)
17 Cotton fabric, ribbed surface (8)
19 Give life to (7)
20 Happen again (5)
21 Take to pieces (9)

Down

1 Bitterness of feeling (8)
2 Very uncommon thing (6)
3 Troublesome insect (4)
4 Erica in Malta (anag) — one part of the world (5,7)
5 Metropolitan Police HQ (8,4)
6 Large piano (7,5)
7 Personal viewpoints (12)
12 French policeman (8)
15 Concealed (6)
18 Listed facts (4)



Last week's solution



Bridge Zia Mahmood

***ITALY*, which dominated bridge during the sixties and seventies with the Squadra Azzura — the Blue Team that included Belladonna, Forquet and Garozzo — may have finally found successors to those legends of the game.**

Lorenzo Lauria and Alfredo Versace, Norberto Bocchi and Guido Duboin, Andrea Buratti and Massimo Lanzarotti won the European Championships for the second consecutive time last month. And, though they have yet to prove themselves on the world stage against the Americans, their victory was emphatic enough to suggest that the Bermuda Bowl may take up residence on the European side of the Atlantic when the World Championships are contested in October.

One deal during the European Championships set a record that will never be equalled — for the least successful penalty double of all time. It also had the highest contract that the North-South pair at one table and the East-West pair at the other were prepared to attempt of their own volition. Love all, dealer North:

North
♠ None
♥ A K Q 10 3
♦ A 10 9 7
♣ K Q 7 6

West
♠ A K 10 6 3 2
♥ 6 2
♦ Q J 6 4 3
♣ None

East
♠ Q 9 8
♥ J 7 5
♦ K 8 5 2
♣ J 10 8

South
♠ J 7 5 4
♥ 9 8 4
♦ None
♣ A 9 5 4 3 2

When Germany met Sweden, this was the bidding, with Germany East-West:

South	West	North	East
		1♥	Pass
2♥	4♠	Dble	Pass
Pass	Pass		

The German West player put a lot of pressure on his opponents with his jump to four spades — though the North-South actions were reasonable enough, the penalty from four spades doubled would be 500 at best, wholly inadequate compensation for the grand slam in clubs. In fact, it was far worse than that, for North began the defence with three rounds of hearts. West ruffed and drew trumps in four rounds, on one of which North discarded a diamond! So declarer was able to set up his diamonds for one loser, and Germany recorded 590.

At the other table, the bidding went like this:

South	West	North	East
		1♥	Pass
1♠	2♠(1)	4♠(2)	Pass
Pass(3)	Dble(4)	4NT(5)	Pass
5♣(6)	Pass	6♣(7)	Pass
7♣(8)	Pass	Pass	Pass

(1) Natural, therefore . . . (2) intended as strong cue-bid, showing a three-suited hand, but . . . (3) not so interpreted. (4) I think I can beat this. (5) So do I — let's ask partner if he has a minor suit. (6) Happy to oblige. (7) One more for my baby . . . (8) . . . and one more for the road.

Seven clubs could not be defeated, so Germany scored 1,440 to go with the 590 for a swing of 22 IMPs. At least the Swedish West could console himself that even if he had passed out four spades, his side would still have lost points on the board!

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Cricket Fourth Test: England v Australia

Ashes turn to dust for dismal England

Mike Selvey at Headingley

THERE was no grand defiance, no miracle. A profitable morning and a single delivery after lunch on Monday were all it took for Australia's swaggermen to round up the England strays down the batting order and secure victory in the fourth Test and a 2-1 lead in the series. Anything other than a win for England in the fifth Test starting at Trent Bridge on August 7, and the Ashes will remain in Australian hands for at least two more years.

David Graveney, the chairman of selectors, admitted, after defeat by an innings and 61 runs, that changes would have to be made in a last desperate throw. "We must not be panicked into wholesale changes but at the same time we have to give ourselves the best possible chance," he said. "We need an injection."

With Dominic Cork back and beginning to fire for Derbyshire, Andy Caddick seething at Somerset, Mark Ramprakash exuding class for Middlesex and a brace of Hollioakes champing at the bit, Alec Stewart, for example, Mark Butcher, Mark Ealham, Graham Thorpe, a seemingly distracted cricketer at present, and the hapless Mike Smith will all be aware of the axe being honed.

England have not beaten Australia at Trent Bridge since 1977, when a floppy-haired genius strangled the wicket of Greg Chappell and announced himself to the Test world. After the final wicket had fallen on Monday the same Ian Botham, commentator now and match adjudicator here, conveyed his decision.

The award went not to Matthew Elliott for his innings of 199, to Ricky Ponting or to Paul Reiffel, who took half of England's second-innings wickets and scored an unbeaten half-century on Sunday morning, but to the slender young Jason Gillespie, who in the first England innings had produced the best innings bowling figures ever by an Australian at Headingley. Gillespie is a shy man of few words but those he utters reveal a disarmingly personable character. "I'm off to have a few beers," he told television viewers, "in a very short space of time." He earned them.

A flat-batted four by Smith off the last ball before lunch gave him something tangible to take from the game and took England to 268, their highest score in the series since the heady times a million years ago when Hussain and Thorpe ran riot at Edgbaston and put on 20 more than that on their own.

Armed with the second new ball Reiffel had taken four wickets for six runs in 27 deliveries to finish, almost by stealth, with five for 49.

There were no more wickets for Glenn McGrath, whose hostility excised the two openers on Sunday afternoon, but Gillespie nicked a tail-ender for himself and Shane Warne took the early and vital wicket of Hussain, who had scored another fine century for his country. Warne, of course, was the fellow England had gone to great lengths to nullify by switching pitches, and, in conceding only the one wicket and no runs to him with the bat, they succeeded. They just forgot the others.

It was an overwhelming win and owed much to the quality of the Australian play. But England, as so often in the past, failed to take the chances presented. The second day, as both Mark Taylor and Michael Atherton recognise, held the key. England had done well to lose only three wickets on the first day and needed to consolidate. They failed and then, having reduced Australia to 50 for four in reply, they failed again. Elliott and Ponting put the match out of reach and after that it was merely a question of when, rather than if, Australia would win.

Resistance on the final day depended on Hussain and John Crawley extending their partnership, already worth 179, into something epic. Instead, by the end of the fourth over of the day, when Hussain drove a low catch to mid-off for 105, the match was effectively over. Crawley and Ealham lasted for more than an hour together before Ealham was caught. Crawley followed, bowled for 72, and the last five wickets fell in little more than seven overs for 16 runs.


Jason Gillespie, bowling himself into the record books TOM JENKINS

Scoreboard

ENGLAND
First Innings

M A Butcher c Blewitt b Reiffel	24
M A Atherton c Gillespie b McGrath	41
A J Stewart c Blewitt b Gillespie	7
N Hussain c Taylor b McGrath	26
D W Headley c S R Waugh b Gillespie	22
G P Thorpe b Gillespie	15
J P Crawley c Blewitt b Gillespie	2
M A Ealham not out	8
R D B Croft c Ponting b Gillespie	6
D Gough b Gillespie	0
A M Smith b Gillespie	0
Extras (b4, lb4, w1, nb12)	21
Total (59.4 overs)	172

Fall of wickets: 43, 58, 103, 138, 154, 154, 163, 172, 172.

Bowling: McGrath 22-5-67-2, Reiffel 20-4-41-1, Gillespie 13.4-1-37-7; Blewett 3-0-17-0, Warne 1-0-2-0.

AUSTRALIA
First Innings

M A Taylor c Stewart b Gough	0
M T G Elliott b Gough	199
G S Blewett c Stewart b Gough	1
M E Waugh c & b Headley	8
S R Waugh c Crawley b Headley	4
R T Ponting c Ealham b Gough	127
I A Healy b Ealham	31
S K Warne c Thorpe b Ealham	0
P R Reiffel not out	54
J N Gillespie b Gough	3
G D McGrath not out	20
Extras (b9, lb10, nb35)	54
Total (for 9 dec, 123 overs)	501

Fall of wickets: 0, 16, 43, 50, 318, 382, 383, 444, 461.

Bowling: Gough 36-5-149-5; Headley 25-2-125-2, Smith 23-2-89-0, Ealham 19-3-56-2; Croft 18-1-49-0, Butcher 2-0-14-0.

ENGLAND
Second Innings

M A Butcher c Healy b McGrath	19
M A Atherton c Warne b McGrath	2
A J Stewart b Reiffel	16
N Hussain c Gillespie b Warne	105
G P Thorpe c M E Waugh b Gillespie	15
J P Crawley b Reiffel	72
M A Ealham c M E Waugh b Reiffel	4
D W Headley lbw b Reiffel	3
R D B Croft c Healy b Reiffel	5
D Gough c M E Waugh b Gillespie	0
A M Smith not out	4
Extras (b6, lb4, nb13)	23
Total (91.1 overs)	268

Fall of wickets: 23, 28, 57, 89, 222, 252, 256, 263, 264.

Bowling: McGrath 22-5-80-2; Reiffel 21.1-2-49-5, Gillespie 23-8-65-2, Warne 21-6-53-1, S R Waugh 4-1-11-0.

Umpires: M J Kitchen and C J Mitchley
Australia won by an innings and 61 runs

Rugby Union

All Blacks have all the answers

Robert Galvin in Melbourne

THE ALL BLACKS secured the Bledisloe Cup and placed a hand on the Tri-Nations championship when they cruised to a 33-18 victory over Australia in front of a huge crowd at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

A record 90,119 spectators, including 15,000 travelling New Zealanders, saw the All Blacks dominate all areas of the game and then, with the match as good as won, coast to the final whistle.

"We showed tremendous resolve," said their coach John Hart, who had complained beforehand about his players' heavy travel schedule and lack of recovery time.

"It was the biggest challenge for an All Black side in many years — to win in Johannesburg and then in Melbourne. It was just sensational."

The result was hardly in doubt once Bunce, who scored two tries in the previous Saturday's 35-32 win against the Springboks, crossed the line after 10 minutes. The veteran centre was put through after Wallabies No 8 Brial missed a tackle on flanker Randell.

Virtually from the restart, Brial was at fault again, losing possession and allowing the All Blacks scrum-half Marshall to send a long kick towards Australia's line, where Wilson out-paced Manu to score.

Spencer converted both and landed three first-half penalties while his opposite number, the Australian full-back Burke, replied with two penalties to see his side trailing 23-6 at the interval.

The match was played in an intense atmosphere but the home supporters were again silenced after the turn-round when Cullen crossed for his 15th try in 16 Tests and Spencer, who also kicked another penalty, converted.

The tiring New Zealanders then surrendered two late tries with the game well beyond Australia's reach. The outstanding scrum-half Gregan crossed the line for the first and Burke converted before Little salvaged some respectability with another touchdown.

It was New Zealand's second win in the best-of-three Bledisloe Cup series: the first, by 30-13, came in Christchurch last month. It was also their sixth successive victory against Australia since 1994.

The All Blacks captain Fitzpatrick, whose knee injury had made him a fitness doubt only hours before kick-off, was the catalyst this time. "We've had a difficult couple of weeks and to win the cup is a thrill," he said later.

With the return fixtures against the Springboks and Australia to come, New Zealand are well placed to maintain their domination of the southern hemisphere game. "I think this team is starting to extend its boundaries in terms of performance," Hart added.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Shearer is sidelined

WITH just over a week to go before the start of the new football season, Newcastle United were plunged into crisis when $25 million striker Alan Shearer was told he will be out of the games for months following surgery for an ankle injury he sustained in the Umbro International Tournament at Goodison Park last Saturday.

The operation was the England captain's third in less than a year since he joined the North-east club last August. Newcastle manager Kenny Dalglish said: "Alan had an operation to repair torn ligaments. He will be out for a wee while, months rather than weeks."

Newcastle also failed in a last-ditch attempt to delay the $10 million transfer of their other main striker, Les Ferdinand, to Tottenham Hotspur. He agreed personal terms with the London club's chairman Alan Sugar on Sunday evening.

The news rounded off a miserable week for Newcastle, who were beaten 3-0 by Ajax in Sunday's third-place play-off in the Umbro tournament at Goodison Park, having drawn 1-1 with Chelsea. Ruud Gullit's men collected the final honours, beating Everton 3-1.

Football chiefs agreed in principle to let out-of-contract players aged 24 and over in England move to other clubs for no fee.

The Premier League and the Professional Footballers' Association reached a compromise which brings the English game in line with European laws brought about by the Bosman ruling, which has been responsible for an influx of foreign players into the Premiership. Football League clubs want to postpone such an arrangement for another year.

WARWICKSHIRE made light work of Somerset when the first floodlight cricket match in a major British competition was played at Edgbaston in midweek — a Sunday League tie played on Wednesday. With minutes to go to midnight, Warwickshire (224 for 4) beat Somserset by 35 runs.

The experiment was immediately pronounced a phenomenal success The game's other statistics were: 15,174 watched — at least three times the crowd Warwickshire would have expected on a fine Sunday; the club took more money at the gate than they get from a season of County Championship matches — about $200,000; the hired lights, beaming down from five 140ft high mobile cranes, cost $80,000. The club are now planning to install their own lights, and it looks certain that there will be more of the same in the future.

Sri Lanka beat India by eight wickets to win the Asia Cup in Colombo. Chasing a target of 240 off 50 overs, the home side were given an ideal start by openers Sanath Jayasuriya (63) and Marvan Atapattu (84 not out), plundering 137 runs off 18.1 overs.

Arjuna Ranatunga, the captain, then hit 62 off 67 balls. "They played like world champions and gave us no chance," said the Indian captain Sachin Tendulkar.

Dermot Reeve, former captain of Warwickshire, is to join the coaching staff for the England women's cricket team, to help motivate players and building team spirit in the lead-up to the five-match one-day series against South Africa starting later this month.

CANADA'S Ben Johnson, banned for life by the International Amateur Athletic Federation four years ago after testing positive for drugs for the second time, has failed in his legal challenge to have the ban lifted. "Most major sports impose a lifetime ban after an athlete has been caught for a second time using banned substances," a judge said in a court at Brampton, Ontario.

OLYMPIC athlete Diane Modahl scored a second victory in her long-running battle with the British Athletic Federation when she was given the go-ahead in the Appeal Court to sue the federation for more than $1.5 million for wrongly banning her for alleged drug abuse. The 31-year-old runner won the first round in the High Court a year ago when Mr Justice Popplewell refused to block her damages bid. Modahl was "delighted" with the verdict.

A RECORD 131 nations will compete in next year's Davis Cup, the International Tennis Federation said. First-time entrants include Honduras, Netherlands Antilles, St Lucia and the US Virgin Islands.

BEN HOGAN died at his home in Forth Worth, Texas, after a lengthy illness. He was 84. Hogan was one of four golfers to have completed the career Grand Slam, the winning of all four major championships. He survived a car crash in 1949 in which he was almost killed, receiving the last rites. Hogan competed in 16 Majors, winning nine, and is the only person to win three professional Grand Slam tournaments in one season.

